

Fall 12-2011

A Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Administrative Rules for Gang-Related Activities in Middle and High Schools

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The University of Southern Mississippi

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADMINISTRATIVE
RULES FOR GANG-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

by

David Thomas Chiprany

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2011

ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES FOR GANG-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

by David Thomas Chiprany

December 2011

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse reported that 35 percent of middle school students and 45 percent of high school students say that there are students who are affiliated with gangs or who consider themselves to be affiliated with gangs in their schools (Arciaga, Sakamoto, & Jones, 2010). Gangs are increasingly violent and criminally involved and their impact on the school environment negatively influences student performance (National Gang Center, 2010a). As juveniles engage in criminal activity, the justice system has developed a set of laws and consequences in an effort to suppress the behavior. Schools followed the lead of the juvenile justice system and punish students through disciplinary measures such as out-of-school suspension. The purpose of this study was to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level the means to keep their schools safe from gang-related misconduct. The researcher also sought recommendations from middle and high school principals for improving current gang-related discipline policies.

The study involved a mixed methodology with a survey instrument that included quantitative items and an interview instrument that included qualitative questions posed to a subset of the sample of principals. The rationale for using a mixed method was to

ensure a more comprehensive approach to obtaining information about principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies.

The results from the quantitative phase indicated that principals do not believe that OSS is an effective consequence to suppress or prevent future gang-related behavior. They agree that the gang-related policies allow them the ability to keep their school safe from gang activity. Although the economic status of the community, years of principal experience, school level, and school enrollment in total have a significant effect on a principal's perspective of the adequacy of gang-related behavior, there was no unique significant predictor.

For the qualitative phase, eight principals selected in accordance with the number of gang-related rates at the school for the past three years were interviewed. The principal responses were organized into two categories and corresponding themes were analyzed using a thematic code development method.

The qualitative results support the notion that OSS is not an effective consequence for gang-related behavior. All eight principals reported that supportive strategies need to be implemented along with gang-related policy consequences to be more effective. The study also addressed recommendations for policy and future research.

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A Dissertation

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December 2011

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Diane Chiprany, and my children, Zachary Thomas Chiprany and Emily Ann Chiprany. They have supported me during the entire process. I thank them for their understanding and patience. I am truly blessed to have them in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank the Dissertation Committee members, Dr. Michael Ward, Dr. Rose McNeese, Dr. Wanda Maulding, and Dr. Tammy Greer for the many hours they committed to me through the dissertation journey. I was truly blessed to have Dr. Ward as my dissertation committee chair. Without his constant support, demand for excellence, and incredible feedback, completing the task would have been extremely difficult. I have learned so much from Dr. Ward and I will always be grateful. In fact, we, the Cobb cohort group, often quote or reference information we learned from Dr. Ward.

I would also like to thank Dr. McNeese and Dr. Maulding for their support and commitment toward seeing the University of Southern Mississippi Doctorate of Educational Leadership Cobb cohort program through. Our group was truly blessed to have their leadership the past two and one-half years. Last but not least, I want to thank Dr. Greer. She is truly gifted in statistics. I can't thank her enough for our evening conversations about Chapter III and Chapter IV and her patience as we worked through the statistical analyses of my dissertation. I have learned so much from her. Our group will never forget our two weeks down in Long Beach taking stats. The turtles will miss us.

It has been an honor and privilege to be a student at The University of Southern Mississippi. I will do my best to model in my private and professional life after the high expectations and dedication to excellence that I learned at USM. I am proud to be a part of such a fine educational institution. Go Golden Eagles!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The pages contained in this chapter introduce the study. The statement of the problem and purpose of the study are addressed. Historical and background information are presented to establish a need for this study. This chapter addresses research questions, delimitations, assumptions and justification of the study.

In October of 2009, two gang-affiliated students participated in a fight at a major high school in the metro-Atlanta area. The fight began as a group of students skipped class and congregated outside of a classroom located outside of the main building. A student was called out of class and a fight started between the student who was called out and one student from the group. Upon investigation by school administration and local law enforcement, the two fighters, along with a number of on-lookers, were determined to be known gang participants. The two fighters and the on-lookers were taken into custody. After a brief stint of out-of-school suspension, the school district's discipline code for gang-affiliation allowed for the on-lookers to return to school. Later that same year, two of the gang-affiliated on-lookers from the October incident assaulted a female student. That incident caused another major school disruption.

Unfortunately, these kinds of events occur in many schools across the nation. Administration is limited to reactionary measures only after a gang-related incident occurs as known gang members are allowed to attend school. The purpose of this study is to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level the means to keep their schools safe. Specific feedback from school district principals on their recommended restrictive

measures and the association between the number of gang-related incidents at the school and perspectives of principals regarding the quality of gang-related policies also will be investigated.

Statement of the Problem

There are a number of conditions that researchers have identified as reasons for which youth join gangs. These conditions include community, school, and individual factors. According to the National Gang Center (2010a), gangs tend to unite and develop in high crime areas within socially disadvantaged neighborhoods. The groups become institutionalized when their structure is stronger than the surrounding social institutions including family, school, and economic systems.

In response to delinquents' engagement in criminal activity, the justice system has developed a set of laws and consequences in an effort to suppress the behavior. Because they are not adults, youngsters engaged in criminal conduct confront a juvenile justice system that is typically based on rehabilitation rather than incarceration. The historical mission of the juvenile justice system was to not punish, but to rehabilitate offenders. *Parens patriae*, "in the interest of," is a key point of the courts (Van Vleet, 1999). The goal is to put a juvenile in a secure environment and not in jail. These secure environments include options such as reform schools and house arrest under parent supervision; youths under house arrest must attend school to meet their parole requirements.

Just as the juvenile justice system has to address delinquent activity, so do the school systems. School boards, along with administrators, created many policies to address inappropriate behavior. As gangs infiltrate schools, research suggests that school

administrators often fail to realize when a gang problem is developing or present; they often dismiss gang-like behavior as the actions of students who are engaged in pretense and are not actually a part of a gang. Typically, it is too late to stop the problem by this time. At this point, the atmosphere of the school can become contentious between the students being accused of gang affiliation and the adults making the accusations (Thompkins, 2000). In particular, gang activity is met with consequences that are meant to suppress the behavior. Some observations further suggest that students targeted for disciplinary reform can internalize the discipline aimed at them. While for some this may lead to self-regulation and complicity, for others it could produce resistance and disengagement from school (Morris, 2005).

A common consequence administered by schools for gang-related activity is out-of-school suspension (OSS). The effect of such exclusions as a tool for eliminating misconduct is not strong according to research (Costenbader & Markson, 1997). There is little evidence, according to Morrison and Skiba (2001), that supports that students who are suspended avoid further suspension.

As gangs become more violent and criminally involved, their impact on the school environment magnifies. Gang members have a propensity to incite fear among students and teachers. Any distraction during instruction can have significant impact on student achievement. A study by Schwab-Stone, Ayers, Kaspro, Voyce, Barone, Shriver, and Weissberg (1995) found that children who witness violent acts in the community had a significantly higher probability of poor performance in school as measured by report cards and retention rates.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) announced that 25 percent of males and 23 percent of females reported gang presence at their schools. At the current time, juveniles that have been identified as gang participants can enroll into a public school. In many cases, gang-related students must attend school as part of their parole for off-campus criminal activity.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level with the means to keep their schools safe from gang-related misconduct. Middle and high school principals from four school districts in the southeastern United States participated in the study. Feedback was sought on the association between principals' perspectives on the adequacy of gang-related activity and school demographic information, the presence of gang-related activity and the number of gang-related incidents at the school. Specific feedback on recommended restrictive measures for gang-related activity from four middle and four high school principals was also analyzed.

Background of the Study

Definition of Gang

The term gang is often associated with "street gang," "youth gang," and "criminal street gang". The exact definition of a gang is often debated. As outlined by the National Gang Center (2010a), researchers classify gangs with the following criteria: the group has three or more members-typically aged 12-24, the members share an identity commonly linked to a name or symbols, members view themselves as a gang and they are recognized by others as a gang, the group has some sense of organization, and the groups

are involved in an elevated level of criminal activity. Local authorities and jurisdictions identify gangs with the following characteristics: a group of three or more members who participate in serious crimes and violence on the streets that are a concern to citizens and policy makers (National Gang Center, 2010a).

Federal law defines the term gang as an ongoing group, club, and association of five or more persons that have a focus on committing one or more criminal offenses; the members of the group engage or have engaged within the past five years in a series of criminal offenses, and the activities affect the interstate or foreign commerce. Federal law defines a gang member as someone that participates in a criminal street gang with the knowledge that the members participate or will participate in criminal behavior and that intends to promote him or herself by participating in criminal acts to maintain or increase his or her position in the gang (National Gang Center, 2009a). States have a variety of gang definitions.

State laws define the words gang member in a number of ways. Fourteen states have laws that define gang member. Six states list characteristics that a person must meet to be considered a gang member. Thirty-nine states have the definition of a gang in legislation. Thirty define a gang as a group consisting of three or more persons. Twenty-three include a common name, identifying sign, or symbol in their definition. Twenty-four states refer to a gang as an association, organization or group. For example, in Georgia, a gang is defined as an organization, association, or group of three or more persons that engages in a pattern of criminal activity. The group has a common name, identifying signs, tattoos, graffiti, attire or other distinguishing marks (National Gang Center, 2009a).

Gang-related Behavior in Schools

Once a gang is established in a community and infiltrates the school system, their presence in school can be identified in many ways. Gangs have been linked to bullying, fighting, and social group conflicts. They are also connected to drugs and alcohol consumption on school grounds (Center for Mental, 2007). Alcohol use is nearly 30% higher for gang members as compared to non-gang members (Swabn, Bossarte, & West, 2010). Gangs are also connected to forms of property abuse including theft, vandalism, and graffiti on school grounds.

The 2007 National Crime Victimization Survey, which profiled school-related victims of crime, noted that 38.8% of students reported they were victims of a crime on school grounds when gangs were present as compared to only 22.6% of students who were victims of a crime in schools with low incidence of gang activity. Schools with a significant amount of gang activity reported nearly 20% more violent crimes and theft compared to schools with low incidence of gang-activity (DeVoe & Bauer, 2010). Gang-related behaviors of youth in and out of school reached national attention in the 1990's.

Federal Law

At the state of the union address in 1997, President Clinton asked Congress to put together a united attack on juvenile crime with more prosecutions and stiffer penalties (Gangs, 2008). The increase in gang membership in the United States, specifically in the 1990's, had a negative effect on families and communities across the nation. In response to President Clinton's speech, congress considered passing the first major statue to address gang violence; the legislation was referred to as the Anti-Gang Youth Violence Act of 1997 (H.B. 810, 1997). This piece of legislation would have provided \$200

million in funding for local anti-gang programs; the bill would have also been Congress's biggest attempt to curb gang violence (Gangs, 2008). The bill did not pass.

In January of 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Excerpts from the Safe and Drug Free Act, n.d.). Part of NCLB was the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA), which was established to hold schools accountable for providing a safe school environment free of drugs and undisciplined behavior. School systems and local schools that provided an organized plan to address drugs and school violence could earn additional funds from the federal government. Although the Act did not specifically target gang activity, it pressured the schools to develop sound discipline policies that would be analyzed from year to year by state accountability agencies to determine their effectiveness in dealing with unsafe behavior. Although congress has not yet passed a comprehensive anti-gang bill, federal authorities lean on a number of statutes to address gang-related offences.

Federal authorities address gang activity through a number of drug offences outlined in Title 21 of the United States Code. The federal drug statute allows the justice system to address gang activity in three ways. First, the statute allows prosecutors to look at violence and the threat of violence when there is a connection to drugs; violence is a tactic often used by gang members to ensure that their drugs are sold. Second, the drug statute's consequences for possession are stiff and can be an effective means to keep gang members off the streets for a long period of time. Third, the conspiracy aspect of the drug statute allows prosecutors to indict someone who possesses drugs with the intent to distribute or conspires with others to distribute (Alesia & Lausch, 2008).

Firearms offense statutes provide another tool for prosecuting gang members. Gang members often use firearms to further their drug trafficking and acts of violence. An individual who carries a firearm in relation to a drug exchange or possesses a firearm during an exchange is a more stringent dimension violation of the law. A second violation of this statute by a gang member carries harsher penalties, including a mandatory minimum 25-year sentence (Alesia, & Lausch, 2008).

A third area where prosecutors use United States Code against gang affiliates is robbery and extortion. Under the Hobbs Act, robbery or extortion that affects interstate commerce is a federal crime. Gang members will often rob or extort from individuals and rival gangs to assert their dominance or further their drug trade. For example, a rival gang robs a house and takes a substantial financial amount that leaves the victim's funds depleted. The lack of funds prevents the victim from purchasing goods from another state to continue operating his business. As a result, the robbery negatively affected interstate commerce and prosecutors have the means to charge the individuals with robbery under the Hobbs Act (Alesia & Lausch, 2008).

The most pressing statute to confront gang activity is RICO, Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. A racket is an illegal business that is typically run by organized criminals such as a gang. Rackets include demanding money for protection from crime or running illegal lottery games. RICO gives federal authorities that right to prosecute such individuals who are participating in racketeering that often involve gangs (Alesia & Lausch, 2008). In association with RICO is VICAR (Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering).

VICAR gives federal prosecutors the ability to charge a person for attempted murder such as when a gang member attempts to kill a rival gang member in retaliation. Under normal federal statute, there is no attempted murder statute. It is necessary for the prosecutors to prove that the individual or individuals involved in the attempted murder are a part of an enterprise. An enterprise is a group of people associated together, such as a gang, but are not a legal conglomerate. This is often proven through a tape recording of meetings where ranking members give orders or securing copies of gang laws (Alesia & Lausch, 2008).

In concert with the federal government, the state of Georgia also has developed laws to address gang-related behavior. The following section is a review of Georgia law on gang-related behavior.

Georgia Law

Georgia legislatures have written numerous laws to address gang-related activity that reflects much of the country. In 2007, State lawmakers passed the Georgia Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act (National Gang Center, 2010c). Georgia code 16-15-2: Legislative Findings and Intent outlines the mission of the act, which is to protect all Georgians from fear, intimidation, and harm from violent groups and individuals. The code also outlines the state legislature's belief that the state of Georgia is in crisis due to violent street gangs that threaten and terrorize peaceful citizens and communities across Georgia. To help suppress the behavior, the code seeks to punish all activities of street gangs by reclaiming all property and materials accumulated by street gangs and to implement steep consequences including long-term incarceration.

Georgia code 16-15-3 defines a criminal street gang as “any organization, association, or group of three or more persons associated in fact, whether formal or informal, which engages in a pattern of criminal gang activity. . . .The existence of such organization, association, or group of individuals associated in fact may be established by evidence of a common name or common identifying signs, symbols, tattoos, graffiti, or attire or other distinguishing characteristics” (National Gang Center, 2010b, “Gang-Related Legislation by State,” Georgia 16-15-3 section, para. 1). The code continues by defining criminal gang activity as follows:

The commission, attempted commission, conspiracy to commit, or solicitation, coercion, or intimidation of another person to commit at least two of the following offenses, provided that at least one of these offenses occurred after July 1, 1998, and the last of such offenses occurred within three years, excluding any periods of imprisonment, of prior criminal gang activity. (National Gang Center, 2010b, “Gang-Related Legislation by State,” Georgia 16-15-3 section, para. 2)

Additional Georgia code elements that specifically address gang activity include Georgia 16-15-4, Participation in Criminal Street Gang Activity Prohibited Participation in Criminal Street Gang Activity Prohibited, Georgia 16-15-9, Commission of Offense Admissible as Evidence of Existence of Criminal Street Gang and Criminal Gang Activity, Georgia 16-15-4, Participation in Criminal Street Gang Activity Prohibited, Georgia 16-15-10, Criminal Street Gang Reward Fund and Georgia 16-15-7, Real Property Used by Criminal Street Gangs Declared Public Nuisance; Abatement; Persons Injured by Gangs Entitled to Treble Damages (National Gang Center, 2010b).

As the federal and state authorities have written laws to address gang activity, it has been incumbent on the juvenile justice system to address gang activity by youth. The age range of gang members goes well into the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system. The next section will review the history of the juvenile justice system and its role in addressing gang-related activity by youth.

The Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile court system was established in 1899 by Cook County, Illinois, on Chicago's west side (Nelson, 2008). Prior to this, children were tried as adults; children under 10 years old were imprisoned with adults and participated in hard labor. The premise of the new justice system for juveniles was that children are inherently different from adults, less mature, less responsible for their acts, and more accepting of rehabilitation. As youth were tried for crimes, the setting did not include a formal adversarial process. The proceedings were less oriented toward intimidation and the court was to act in the best interest of the child. The courts protected the privacy of the young delinquents and typically did not allow the records of acts conducted during a delinquent's youth to follow him/her into adulthood. The courts also hired specially trained psychologists and counselors to provide additional support.

Early on, the courts relied on reformatories or training school to help remediate the young criminals' behavior and provide for their entry back into society. These schools were often harsh, providing strict conditions that did not mirror the mission of rehabilitation. The courts also underestimated the number of social resource personal needed to effectively rehabilitate the youth. The majority of the judges presiding over cases did not have a degree from college, and court proceedings were often limited to ten

or fifteen minutes, and the statutes allowed for judges to use much discretion. The youth were not allowed the same rights as adults in that there was no advance notice of charges, no right to counsel, no right to call witnesses, no right to jury, and no rules of evidence. This ambiguity and informality was intended to allow for flexibility in the best interest for the child; in reality, it caused a big disparity in treatment of white children compared to minority (Nelson, 2008).

In the 1990's, an anxiety fell over the nation as several high-profile juvenile crimes led to the belief that the youth were the next threat to public safety (Nelson, 2008). In order to hold youth more accountable, juveniles were being treated as adults by the courts. New policies by state judicial systems made it easier for prosecutors to transfer juveniles to adult court, which allowed judges to impose mandatory minimum sentences for youth and lift the protective cover of confidentiality in court proceedings.

From the 1997 congressional subcommittee meeting focused on the proposed Anti-Gang Act, Chair Riggs believed that there needs to be a balanced approach towards juvenile justice. He stated that juveniles that continue to break laws and are violent, predatory offenders need to be locked up to ensure public safety. On the other hand, the juvenile justice system is a good place to intervene with prevention strategies to turn youth away from violence and crime (Administration's Anti-Gang, 1997). Today's judges and legislatures have reverted back to the juvenile justice system as a place to foster rehabilitation as it was originally intended.

Georgia Juvenile Justice System

The history of Georgia's juvenile justice system mirrors that of much of the Country. In 1908, a court that specifically focused on delinquent children was started in

Georgia (Murphy, 2010). The court was disbanded quickly because it violated the state constitution that all courts must work uniformly. In 1916, a juvenile court system was established in Georgia by state legislatures that gave the juvenile court power over delinquent and neglected children. By 1951, a viable code of juvenile court procedure was enacted in Georgia. Following the Supreme Court case of *Kent vs. United States*, a commission to study and make recommendations on the Georgia Juvenile Code was enacted by the Georgia General Assembly (Murphy, 2010). The provisions and recommendations that came from the commission are still used today.

The Juvenile Justice System of Georgia has jurisdiction over delinquency, unruliness, and deprivation issues as well as other actions involving children (Murphy, 2010). In 1971, a child was defined as anyone under the age of 17. Originally, the target age was under the age of 18. However, due to limited funds, children 16 years old and under are included in the Juvenile Justice Code's umbrella. There was a provision for the juvenile courts to address issues of deprivation to 17-year-old children in certain situations. Deprivation includes situations such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse, lack of supervision, unclean living conditions, and lack of medical care, inadequate food, and corporal punishment (Murphy, 2010). The only time a child would not be tried in a juvenile court would be when the allegation is based on a delinquent act that could be punished by a loss of life or life in prison. These allegations include but are not limited to murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated sexual battery, aggravated sodomy, and armed robbery if committed with a firearm.

Gang-related criminal acts by juvenile delinquents have been a catalyst for many federal and state statutes in the previous sections. At the peak of gang-related incidents

in the 1990s, the juvenile justice system was taxed to the point of causing fear at the federal level. Unfortunately, gang-related activity is not only affecting our communities, gang-related activity has also affected our school environment as illustrated in the introduction of this study. In the state of Georgia where our sample districts are located, the Department of Education requires all school districts to ensure a safe learning environment.

Georgia Student Code of Conduct

Georgia law requires all local boards of education have a student code of conduct. Among the accreditation requirements Office of Standards, Instruction and Assessment from the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE), are those that require that all schools in the state of Georgia provide a safe learning environment. More specifically, the Title IV Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act requires the GDOE to direct each school system to identify what is acceptable and unacceptable student behavior. Each school system must also articulate through district policy the consequences that each unacceptable behavior would bring from school administrators and clearly communicate the behavior code to the students, parents, and teachers (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.b.). The ultimate goal of the policy as outlined by GDOE is to perpetuate acceptable behavior through the framework of a student code of conduct.

The GDOE goes on to outline a number of behavior codes that are recommended. The list includes demonstrating self-respect to self and others, demonstrating courtesy to others, behaving in a responsible manner, regular attendance, being prepared for class, taking the course of study seriously, cooperating with school officials, respecting others' property, and avoiding violation of the student code of conduct. The GDOE further

suggests that school systems provide clear and concise policies, match the consequence with the behavior code violation, and take into consideration any mental or physical disabilities (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.b.). The effectiveness of the gang-related discipline policies as perceived by middle and high school principals was the focus of this study.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perspectives of local principals regarding the adequacy of policies that address gang activity?
2. Are there differences among the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies depending upon the demographic profiles and levels of their schools?
3. Is there a relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at the school and perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies?
4. Is there a relationship between the presence of gang-related activity and the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies?
5. What suggestions do current principals have for improving district discipline policy related to gang affiliation?

Delimitations

The participants in the survey were limited to principals of middle schools and high schools from the southeast. The potential sample population represented a total of

66 middle schools and 45 high schools. The study was limited to this population, and generalizations should be restricted to populations with similar district characteristics.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that all participants will answer the survey and interview honestly and to the best of their knowledge. It was also assumed that all respondents will follow all directions provided and answer all questions in a manner that is consistent with the purpose of the survey and interview.

Justification

In August of 2010, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse reported that 35 percent of middle school students and 45 percent of high school students say that there are students who are affiliated with gangs or who consider themselves to be affiliated with gangs in their schools (Arciaga, Sakamoto, & Jones, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) reported that in 2007, twenty-three percent of students reported that there were gangs present in their school. At the middle school level, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, reported a lower presence of gangs than that reported by high school students in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades (National Center, 2010e). Based on data from the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 35.9 percent of high school students have been in a physical fight and 3.6 percent of the students have been injured to the point of being treated by a doctor or nurse.

As gangs become more violent and criminally involved, their impact on the school environment magnifies. Gang members have a propensity to incite fear among students and teachers. Any distraction during instruction can have significant impact on student achievement. A study by Schwab-Stone (1995) found that children who witness

violent acts in the community have a significantly higher probability of poor performance in school as measured by report cards and retention rates. Overstreet and Braun (1999) discovered a significant negative correlation between community violence exposure and grade point average at the middle school level. Bowen and Van Horn (2002) discovered community violence exposure negatively influenced school grades for more than 2000 middle and high school students.

Bowen & Van Horn (2002) reported that teacher attrition rate in violent communities and school increases as teachers try to transfer to a safer working environment. The school violence not only affects the students who are directly attacked, the crime and violence can compromise the opportunities of all students and staff, especially for those students who have low self-esteem and are vulnerable. For example, school events and programs may be avoided or cancelled due to the fear of major disruptions or violence during the event. Their education experience can be very poor. The physical and the psychological impact of gang violence can be damaging to the student and school's academic success. The presence of school violence and crime can negatively impact an individual student's attendance, ability to avoid trouble, and grades. These feelings of insecurity further foster the negative behaviors of not going to school and could lead to gang membership and substance abuse for the students (2002).

These contemporary phenomena justify a study of the problem of gangs in school, their effects on student performance, and their impact on school climate safety. Furthermore, these phenomena justify the importance of this study in determining if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level the means to keep their schools safe.

Summary

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse reported that 35 percent of middle school students and 45 percent of high school students say that there are students who are a part of gangs or who consider themselves to be a part of gangs in their schools (Arciaga, Sakamoto, & Jones, 2010). Gangs are increasingly violent and criminally involved and their impact on the school environment negatively influenced student performance (National Gang Center, 2010a). As juvenile delinquents engage in criminal activity, the justice system has developed a set of laws and consequences in an effort to suppress the behavior. Because they are not adults, the historical mission of the juvenile justice system was to not punish them, but to rehabilitate offenders. Schools followed the lead of the juvenile justice system and consequence students through suppression measures such as out-of-school suspension. Gang members are often allowed back into the school setting after completing a limited suspension range of days from school. Research suggests that OSS has minimal effect of suppression of inappropriate behavior and suspended students are often suspended for future acts (Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

The purpose of this study was to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level the means to keep their schools safe from gang-related misconduct. Specific feedback from the district's principals on their recommended restrictive measures and the association between the number of gang related incidents at the school and perspectives of principals regarding the quality of gang-related policies was also investigated. The next section will provide the theoretical framework of how children develop their social behavior, why

some lean toward delinquent behavior, and why others turn to gang associations. The chapter will discuss the processes of the juvenile justice system and school districts as they invoke gang-related activity of juvenile gang participants. The juvenile justice system and school district often work in concert with each other as child who are charged with gang-related activities at school also receive charges from the campus or local police. Their relationship is important in the process of rehabilitating the child. Chapter II concludes with pertinent professional research of the perspectives of gang-related discipline policies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are to introduce a theoretical foundation and provide a review of literature and research related to this study. With the intended purpose of addressing the research questions that are focused on the perspectives of principals on the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies, Chapter II is grounded in the theoretical foundation of the study. Chapter II will first examine the origins of behavior development of children and examine reasons why some youth turn to delinquent acts and gang membership. The next sections will review pertinent research and professional perspectives of the juvenile justice system and school discipline codes in addressing gang related behaviors of juvenile delinquents. This is followed by an overview of the influences the juvenile courts and federal statutes have had on the discipline code and disciplinary process at the school level. The chapter continues with the influences the First and Fourteenth Amendment has had on the process of enacting gang-related policy in the schools. The chapter concludes with a review of the perceptions of middle and high school principals regarding the adequacy of consequences used in gang-related discipline policy and the impact of gang-related policies on school's safety.

Theoretical Framework

The theories presented in the following section will shed light on how children develop their social behaviors. Given that the goal of the study is to measure the effectiveness of gang-related discipline policies as perceived by middle and high school principals, an understanding of how a child's behavior is influenced may provide insight

in determining if the restrictive measures of the policies provide the necessary prescription to suppress or change a child from participating in future gang-related activity. The section begins with the social learning theory.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory was published by Alberta Bandura, a Stanford University psychology professor, in 1977. Bandura wrote that human learning is an interaction of three factors: cognitive, behavioral, and environmental. Basically, social learning theory centers on behavior modeling; a child develops behaviors that he observes from actions of children and adults around him or her (Gibson, 2004). To support his theory, Bandura conducted a case study on how violence on television can have negative effects on the behaviors of children who are watching them. He noted in his observations of the children that some of the participants would model the violent acts directly after watching them on television. He referred to this as direct learning through instantaneous matching of behavior reflecting what they have seen. Bandura asserts through the social learning theory that children can learn by the uncomplicated process of watching and then imitating (Bandura, 1977).

Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, and Radosevich (1979) led a study to test components of the social learning theory. From a selected group of high schools, students were interviewed about their behaviors involving drugs and alcohol. The results of the study support the social learning theory and found that youth can and do develop delinquent behaviors from modeling and imitating behaviors of others.

Within the social learning theory, differential peer association “refers to direct association and interaction with others who engage in certain kinds of behavior or

express norms, values, and attitudes supportive of such behavior, as well as the indirect association and identification with more distant reference groups” (Akers & Jensen, n.d. p. 3). Differential peer association in relation to gang affiliation and delinquent behavior is strong. Research evidence strongly suggests that when a person joins a gang, he or she is very likely to develop a higher level of delinquent behavior. The exposure to criminal behavior from delinquent friends or gang associates often proves to be a powerful catalyst for more delinquent behavior by the individual. At its core, the social learning theory claims that the child learns behavior through observing others. The social strain theory provides an alternate view of behavior development.

Social Strain Theory

Robert King Merton developed the origins of the social strain theory of criminal involvement in which an individual will divert to delinquent activity when he or she cannot obtain desired goals. Merton was interested in the study of socio-cultural sources of deviate behavior. He wrote, “Our primary aim lies in discovering how some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct” (Merton, 1938, p. 672). According to the social strain theory, when an individual’s drive for success is blocked, strain or stress sets in, which could influence the individual to violate the law in order to attain the goal. Merton also theorized that people are conformist in behavior and that when their goal of participating in the economic rewards of a wider society are blocked or thwarted by legitimate avenues, the pressure to seek financial means through illegal channels increases. Strain theorists also believe that once strain is removed, the negative behavior will diminish (Agnew, 1992).

Robert Agnew (1992) connected the strain theory to juvenile delinquency. He asserted that the strain theory is not connected in general to social or cultural variables, but to emotional and social factors. Anger and frustration set in from negative relationships felt in the home and other social environments, including school. As the person is subjected to rejection and other unpleasant actions, he or she is more inclined to turn to criminal acts. With younger individuals, Agnew suggested that such straining events could cause the youth to seek associations with criminal peers or gangs in order to cope. In essence the social strain theory relates social development to a person's desire to be successful in obtaining their goals within society's norms. The behavior theory looks at the negative and positive reinforcements in molding one's behavior.

Behavior Theory

The behavior theory suggests that social behavior is shaped by a consequence of one's action. As noted in B. F. Skinner's Operant Condition Box, behavior is influenced by reinforcement and punishment. In the case of positive reinforcement, the behavior is strengthened by some positive experience or reward. In the case of a negative reinforcement, a behavior becomes stronger as a result of avoiding the negative stimuli or punishment. Punishment is the most common form of reinforcement used to diminish an unfavorable behavior. As juveniles develop, their behavior is influenced by many positive and negative reinforcements. Some children may turn to criminal acts as their actions are reinforced by the thrill of the act or by the positive support they receive from their criminal peers and in some cases, their gang member associates. This reinforcing effect increases the individual's behavior in support of the group. In the case of gang affiliation, the gang member's delinquent behavior would increase (Skinner, 2005).

Social Disorganization Theory

The disorganization theory suggests that the social stability of the community and its leaders can affect the behavior development of the child from that community and even lead the child to delinquent behavior. Research supports the idea that neighborhoods have significant influence on the development of children and the disorganization theory is very often cited as a logical explanation for explaining the development of delinquency in urban neighborhoods (Bowen & Van Dorn, 2002).

Social disorganization theory connects juvenile behavior to ecological characteristics of the neighborhoods in which they reside. A type of criminological theory, social disorganization theory attributes crime and delinquency to the absence of communal institutions such as family, church, and government. Additional missing factors include relationships that traditionally encourage cooperative relationships among the group. The concept came about from studies conducted by the University of Chicago (Jensen, 2003).

In the early 1900s, Chicago provided an excellent sample of a diverse social and economic population. The rapid growth of the city hampered the social network of norms that inhibited crime and delinquency. Edwin Sutherland (1924) in his book, *Principals of Criminology*, initiated a concept of social disorganization to define why there had been an increase of criminal activity within the United States. He theorized that as the country changed from the preliterate and peasant societies to the ways of the modern western world characterized by mobility, economic competition, and individualistic ideology, the neighborhood's stability weakened as people moved in and out of the community bringing in new values and beliefs. The influences of the large

family along with strong relationships within the communities of the past were critical in maintaining a high level of civility. As the family broke down and the relationships dwindled in the community, the neighborhoods became more disorganized. From observations in Chicago, Sutherland claimed that social disorganization is the basic cause of systematic criminal behavior (1924).

Robert E. L. Faris further expanded the concept of social disorganization to explain social pathologies, including crime rate. He theorized that the crime rate is directly related to the disorganization of the control mechanisms of the community. The unraveling of the social controls in a community is most prevalent in large industrial cities where a majority of the crimes occur (Jenson, 2003). Social disorganized neighborhoods are characterized by having single parent households, high levels of poverty, high number of individuals moving in and out of the community, and a racially and ethnically diverse population (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009). However, these characteristics just scratch the surface when determining if a community will have a high juvenile crime rate. Researchers suggest that many communities with these types of characteristics have strong vibrant youth who do very well. The researchers suggest that the social networks within the community often have a significant impact on youth delinquency.

The social disorganization theory connects the level of criminal activity to the formal and informal networks of associations within a neighborhood. Researchers have identified a three-level approach to neighborhood control and how these social control mechanisms influence delinquency in the neighborhood (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009). The first level of control is at the private level. At this level, the youth who are

friends with individuals who hold pro-social beliefs, do not want to violate these beliefs or they would risk losing their relationships. Violating the norms would also fracture their social support and mutual esteem within the social network.

The second level represents larger networks of people such as schools, churches, and recreation centers. At this level, youth are exposed to pro-social community norms, adult interaction, and institution resources. For example, schools provide frameworks of information to prepare youth for adulthood; the teachers and administrators act as mentors providing youth with pro-social behavior. Any deviation from the norms of the group would jeopardize the individual's relationships within the group (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009).

The third level is related to the community's relationships with public resources and services outside of the community. Neighborhoods with strong private and public networks of pro-social behavior will often have the ability to access the money needed to bring in resources to support the youth. Ultimately, when these three levels of control work in harmony, the rate of criminal delinquency of juveniles is limited (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009).

Ralph Taylor brings in another factor of the social disorganization theory that he calls collective efficacy (Jenson, 2003). If a community does not share similar values and people do not belong to local organizations for the good of the community, the collective efficacy is low and the crime rate is high. An example of collective efficacy is a neighborhood where neighbors are willing to intervene in community problems for the common good of the community. Juveniles getting into trouble in a neighborhood with high collective efficacy would be addressed by the neighborhood members and the

behaviors would stop. Having mutual respect and trust within the social network of the neighborhood is an important requirement in creating a community with high collective efficacy (Kingston, Huizinga, & Elliott, 2009). Furthermore, from a study in 1996, Taylor tested the notion that the citizens living in a community with a high crime rate would show little or no support for the community. He believed that the crime rate is linked to the level at which the neighbors get along with each other (Taylor, 1996). The results indicated that stability of a community is an important indicator of the level of collective efficacy and the level of the crime rate.

In another study involving collective efficacy, the homicide rates of 343 neighborhoods across Chicago were calculated (Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001). To measure collective efficacy, the researchers calculated the number of organizations such as newspapers, social programs, and health centers. The researchers also calculated the number of friends and relatives that live in the neighborhood through the latest census information. The results strongly suggested that pro-social relationship among community members encouraged social control. The internal controls showed significant influence in lowering the homicide rates in neighborhoods with high collective efficacy.

The leadership of the community, from the family to the school, plays a role in developing law-abiding citizens. Research suggests that a disorganized community can foster a situation where individuals, and in particular youth, would want to join a gang. Whether for acceptance, positive reinforcement, and/or monetary support, gang membership offers some children the stability they need to cope with societal pressures.

The common themes in the behavior theories outlined above indicate that children develop behaviors learned by interactions from their peers and adults with whom they associate and the environment in which they live. The social learning theory asserts that a child develops behaviors that he or she observes from children and adults around them. The social strain theory suggests that individuals will divert to delinquent behavior when they can obtain their ultimate goal of being a productive citizen socially and financially. Furthermore, the positive and negative reinforcements accompanied with delinquent behavior from the child's peers will influence the future delinquent behavior as outlined by the behavior theory.

Social disorganization theory further elaborates these themes. Sampson and Wilson (1995), proponents of the disorganization theory, claim that most violent criminals belong to a group of delinquents such as a gang. Delinquent behaviors by youth are more likely to develop in a disorganized community where the leadership is missing in and outside of the home. They further suggest that in communities where these types of criminal behaviors are not addressed at an early age by social constraints, the delinquent youth will most likely grow into adult criminals.

Furthermore, community members in a neighborhood lacking in synergy have a higher preponderance of crime and violence and are more susceptible to negative outcomes than socially organized neighborhoods. Certain factors often found in disorganized communities such as the availability of guns, lack of access to social services, frequent turnover of community members moving in and out of the neighborhood, high rates of unemployment, presence of drugs and alcohol and the presence of gangs all contribute to the demise of the community and increase of crime

and violence (Bowen & Van Dorn, 2002). Over time, the community begins to breakdown. First, the availability of positive social interactions decrease and the negative social behavior increase. Second, the internal mechanisms of control within the family and neighborhood weaken as interactions of the members of the community reduce.

Conditions in Communities and Schools that Influence Children to Join Gangs

There are a number of conditions that researchers have identified as reasons for which youth join a gang. At the individual level, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001) believe that gang development is a social phenomenon. They believe that social disorganization is a key factor as other researchers report. However, gangs do not always form in neighborhoods with these types of characteristics. In some areas, gangs form in response to an individual social need; these social needs include status, defense, or retaliation. The needs are catalysts that perpetuate gang formation.

According to the National Gang Center (2010b), gangs tend to unite and develop in high crime areas within socially disadvantaged neighborhoods. Moore (1998) builds on the idea of community factors and outlines four community conditions that occur to foster the transition among adolescents from a group of friends to an organized gang. First, there is a lack of productive adult supervision. For example, the parent or legal guardian may be living in the home but there is little relationship building and mentoring between the adult and the child. Behavior boundaries are limited. Families and schools are unproductive and provide little emotional support. The structure of the family and school is weak and lacking any leadership. Second, the youth make time for unstructured anti-social behavior such as drugs and violence. There is little time for productive law abiding behavior with positive social interaction. Third, the future

prospect of getting a good job is limited. The commitment to the gang is more important than securing a job. Finally, there is an opportunity for the youth to come together and engage in criminal behavior because of the lack of supervision and structure. Basically, the youth lack any responsibility or accountability and are left to their own devices.

Wyrick and Howell (2004) also believe that gangs tend to develop in neighborhoods that are socially disorganized and where the crime rate is high. The gang's presence fosters further depression and negative influence that inspires recruitment of new members.

Wyrick and Howell (2004) also identify poor achievement in school, at the elementary level in particular, as a strong risk factor for gang membership. Poor performance is often accompanied by negative labeling of the student by the teachers, which lowers self-esteem. The low self-esteem can be perpetuated as the child experiences potentially harsh social interactions in the classroom, on the playground, and at the lunchroom with other children that can be harsh. The risk increases when a school is deemed unsafe by the children of the school. Seeking gang membership can fulfill the student's need of acceptance and safety.

Safety and acceptance is a fundamental part of an individual's needs according to Abraham Maslow (1987). At the most basic level, students need food, sleep, and shelter to survive. The next level of needs is for a student to feel safe. In the school setting, the consistent implementation of disciplinary policies and a strong supervision plan can help fulfill a student's sense of security. Having a sense of belonging and feeling loved is the next level on the hierarchy scale of needs. This is followed by the need for a high self-esteem. Children who are hard-pressed to fulfill these needs at home or at school could

turn to gang membership. Gangs often feed on children with low self-esteem to increase their memberships (Wyrick & Howell, 2004).

As reported by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001), schools that have higher concentrations of gang activity are predominately located in disorganized communities and the schools are deemed unsafe by the students and community members. The high levels of crime and violence typically associated with disorganized communities negatively impact the student's belief that their school is safe. Students who feel unsafe in their school are less connected to the school. These feelings of insecurity further foster the negative behaviors of not going to school and could lead to gang membership and substance abuse for the students (Bowen & Van Horn, 2002).

Walter Miller (1975) presented a detailed study on youth gangs. Miller conducted 148 interviews from a number of community agencies from 12 major cities. His results noted the following influences of gangs on education: gangs were present at each level of education, gangs had brought violence to schools via beatings, stabbings, and shootings, gangs frightened teachers, and gang members who were drop outs frequented school functions to recruit members. Miller also noted that principals were concerned about the forced integration of opposing gangs into one school, which in turn could potentially increase gang-related behaviors. He also believed that gangs came into school because of compulsory attendance laws pressured principals to keep students in schools.

Howell and Lynch (2000) also outline a number of factors that influence gang activity in schools. The size of the community is one factor. The prevalence of gang activity is often associated with schools that serve communities with higher populations. Schools within population ranges of 100,000 to a million are most affected by gang

affiliation. A second factor is household income. The lower the amount of income equates to a higher prevalence of gang activity in the school. A third factor is drug availability within the community. Drug use often is associated with violence and gang activity. The fourth and most significant factor is the perception of school safety. The faith of the students in the preventative measures of the school in addressing school violence has the most significant influence on gang involvement in school. Students may turn to gangs to provide self-protection from violence in the school (Howell & Lynch, 2000).

The level of understanding of the principal regarding factors that mold a child's behavior and cause a child to join a gang may provide insight into how he or she interprets the quality of gang-related discipline policies. The first research question addresses the adequacy of the discipline policies in addressing gang-related activity. The behavior theories presented a complex variety of events, associations, and conditions that influence behavior development and change. If the goal of the education system is to change the behavior of a gang-affiliated juvenile from undisciplined behavior to pro-social behavior in the school setting, discipline codes grounded only in punitive measures may not be the answer. In addition, the adequacy of the punitive measures may be clearer to principals who address a high number of gang-related incidents because they would be more attuned to gang members' behaviors after these students return to school from suspension.

The second research question in this study asks if the demographics of the school will influence the perspectives of the school's principal. The level of disorganization of the community may be an influential factor in the principal's perception. The behavior

theorist consistently connected some or a majority of the influence factors of behavior development on the positive or negative forces within the community. The next section will examine pertinent research and professional perspectives on how the juvenile justice systems and school districts address gang-related behavior.

Review of Pertinent Research and Professional Perspectives

The purpose of this section is to connect the context within which children develop delinquent gang-related behaviors to the prescribed school discipline policies that are used to suppress and prevent future gang-related behavior. This section begins with a review of gang expansion and development in the United States and in schools. This is followed by a review of the juvenile justice system and school systems and the means through which each system addresses gang-related juvenile behavior. The influence of the juvenile justice system on the school system and their common concerns will then be presented. The section includes a review of documented principal perspectives on the adequacy of disciplinary consequences outlined by discipline policies that are associated with gang-related activity.

Gang Expansion and Development

The expansion of gangs resulted from a number of factors. First, with the growth of automobiles and road development, the number of gang localities expanded. Second, the expansion contributed to the growth of gangs in smaller cities and suburban areas. Third, family migration spread the influence of gangs. Finally, desegregation and bussing contributed to the growth of gangs as students moved to alternate schools away from their homes (Miller, 1982).

Larger cities have a longer history of gang problems. Since before the 1990s, nearly half of all large cities have experienced gang problems (National Gang Center, 2010b). The suburban counties and smaller cities vary in their history of gang problems. Overall, about 40 percent of these types of communities have experienced gang activity since the 1990s. Rural and smaller cities had limited experience with gang problems before the year 2000. As cited in Table 1, gang problem onset was much more prevalent in the larger cities before the 1990's and expanded to smaller cities and rural counties after the year 2000.

Table 1

Gang-Problem Onset

	Larger Cities	Suburban Counties	Smaller Cities	Rural Counties
Before 1990s	47.1	17.2	9.9	5.9
1990s	34.9	44.1	41.4	39.3
2000 or After	7.3	17.6	25.9	25.9

Note: The numbers in each column represent the percentages of each area reporting gang activity adapted from "Facts about gangs," by National Gang Center 2010b.

Four groups are identified at the forefront of the gang phenomenon; the four groups are the Crips, the Pirus or Bloods from the west coast, the Folk Nation, and People Nation that organized in the Midwest (Weldon, Petrie, & Lindauer, 2001). All of these groups, along with their related smaller gangs adopted greetings, signs, symbols, and dress as a way to identify themselves as friend or enemy among the youth on the streets. The Folk Nation, for example, uses the right side of the body to place flags and other markings that are blue or black to represent their gang. The People Nation favors the left side of the body; a Latin King, a subgroup gang of the People Nation, would not wear his or her hat to the right. Gangs also use sport teams imagery as identifying

symbols. For example, the Bloods, who favor red and black, use the Chicago Bull uniform as a favorite mode of dress. Gangs adopt these symbols and colors to assert their presence and to challenge and denigrate other groups (2001).

The increase in gang membership in the United States, specifically in the 1990s, had a negative effect on the nation's communities. The number of violent events related to gangs increased as the members began to enter the area of drug dealing. At the peak of the crack epidemic, gang violence was at an all-time high (National Gang Center, 2010a).

Since 2000, National Youth Gang Survey Analysis (NYGSA) reported a marked increase in gang problems. The NYGSA is based on a nationally represented sample of law enforcement agencies located in large cities, small cities, suburban counties, and rural counties. The 2007 NYGSA found that approximately one-third of all agencies in the study reported gang problems; that equates to just over 3500 jurisdictions and represents a statistically significant increase in gang problems since 2001 (National Gang Center, 2010c). Table 2 illustrates this steady increase from 2001 to 2007.

Table 2

Prevalence of Gang Problems in Study Population

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Percent	26.9	23.9	27.8	30.1	28.8	33.6	33.3	34.8

Note: Percentages adapted from "National youth gang survey analysis: Gang problem onset," by the National Gang Center 2010e.

In 2007, about 23 percent of students reported that gangs were present at their schools as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2010). In that same year, 25 percent of males and 23 percent of females reported a gang presence at their

schools. Table 3 identifies the portions of students by race and school type that reported gang presence:

Table 3

Students Reporting Gang Presence by Race and Type of School 2007

	Total	Public	Private	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Percent	23	25	5	16	38	36	17

Note: Adapted from “Indicators of school crime and safety: Indicators of school’s reports of gangs,” by the National Center for Education Statistics 2010.

Since 2000, a number of studies aspired to define the number of youth involved in a gang. In 2005, 24 percent of students reported that there were gangs in their school. Urban students were more likely to report the presence of gangs than their suburban neighbors (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006). Hispanics and Black students reported to be more likely to report gangs in their schools than White students. Vigil (2003) reported in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* that “gangs are now made up, as they were in earlier days, primarily of groups of male adolescents and youths who have grown up together as children, usually as cohorts in a low-income neighborhood of a city. Yet only about 10 percent of youth in most low income neighborhoods join gangs” (p. 226). In response to the growing numbers of gang members and gang-related criminal activity, the juvenile justice system has taken steps in prosecuting and preventing gang-related behavior.

Juvenile Justice System

Operation of the system. As juvenile delinquents engage in criminal activity, the justice system has developed a set of laws and consequences in an effort to suppress and alter the behavior away from criminal acts. Because they are not adults, the juvenile

justice system is based more on rehabilitation than incarceration. The goal is to put a juvenile in a secure environment and not in jail. These secure environments included reform schools or house arrest under parent supervision; youths under house arrest must attend school to meet their parole requirements (Van Vleet, 1999).

Diminished capacity is the concept that youths are less culpable for their acts than adults. The premise for rehabilitation was due to the acceptance that youth are not little adults. Because of the limited life experience, youth have not had the chance to fully develop physically, intellectually, or emotionally. The lack of development justifies the less punitive response by the courts (Van Vleet, 1999). This is further supported by Gardner (1987), who wrote that “adolescent persons lack life experience and thus might be best viewed as 'semi-autonomous,' 'incomplete adults.' It is therefore unrealistic and unfair to hold them to adult responsibility standards” (p. 142). Typically, as a youth becomes more violent, the punishment becomes more severe and diminished capacity becomes less important. In the 1990s, the philosophy of the juvenile courts changed and relied less on rehabilitation or diminished capacity and moved to accountability with stiffer consequences. The number of violent events related to gangs increased as the members began to enter the arena of drug dealing. National perceptions of high and rising crime generated pressure on state legislatures; this caused the juvenile court system to respond with more accountability and tougher punishment of delinquent youth.

Since 2000, the amount of youth violence has decreased and legislatures and judges are returning to the idea that the main purpose of the juvenile court system is rehabilitation (Nelson, 2008). Recent psychological and neurological studies in adolescent development identify that juvenile courts can and should continue efforts in

the rehabilitation of young offenders. Several state legislatures have made it very clear that when a child is punished by the courts, the jurist must look at the child's age, education, mental and physical health condition, and background. In 2005, Washington State legislatures announced that they recognize the unique rehabilitative nature of the juvenile proceedings as continual rational for having judges, not juries, decide cases for juveniles. In California, new provisions written in the mid 1980s recognized punishment as a rehabilitative tool and shifted their punishment to a less restrictive approach for the benefit of the minor (Henning, 2009).

The legal response toward school violence and negative group behaviors has been targeted toward school gangs. The courts increased penalties for any gang-related crimes that occur near or on school grounds. In California, juvenile delinquents are subject to detention at a state prison for three years for conducting gang activity on campus (McCade & Martin, 2005). Working with the courts, schools developed gang-related policies. Specifically, schools prohibited gang dress and jewelry, and developed strict policies on attendance, early departure, and truancy policies (Meeks & Heit, 1995). Gang related instances are reported to local law enforcement. Schools will also charge students with gang-affiliated offense if warranted. In the effort to assist schools and local authorities with understanding and addressing gang activity, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention created the National Youth Gang Center in 1995 (McCade & Martin, 2005). The National Youth Gang Center annually collects statistical data on gangs that are referenced by schools and juveniles courts. School districts work closely with the juvenile justice system to ensure gang members are properly addressed. The next section discusses sentencing measures for gang-related activity.

Sentencing measures of the juvenile justice system. As presented in Chapter I, the federal authorities address gang-related criminal acts by invoking statutes related to racketeering, guns, drugs, and violence. About 70 percent of states have gang related policies that enhance the level of punishment when the offender is under the control of a gang. Georgia, where the sample population is located, has a number of state gang related statutes on the books; these were outlined in Chapter I. The following is a review of the measures that the U.S. Department of Justice prescribes in the Gang Prosecution Manual (2009).

The Gang Prosecution Manual classifies crimes based on the seriousness of the offense as measured by the amount of loss and level of violence (United States Department of Justice, 2009). There are three levels of offense: misdemeanor, crossover crimes, and felonies. A misdemeanor is the lowest offense level and common gang-related misdemeanors include vandalism, fighting, simple assault, and possession of alcohol by a minor. Sentences for misdemeanors are probationary measures to prison for less than a year. Felonies are the highest offense level. Gang-related felonies include serious violent acts including rape, robbery, attempted murder, and murder. These crimes are punishable by confinement in a state prison sometimes for life or death. Crossover crimes are crimes that could be identified as misdemeanor or a felony. Crossover crimes include assault with a deadly weapon, joy riding, grand theft, and drugs (2009). Sentencing for cross-over crimes depended on the level of violence and loss and may range from probationary measures to death.

In comparison with adult courts, juvenile courts prescribe less stringent prescriptive measures than adult courts. Age requirements limit the amount of time

depending on what age a child is considered as a minor by law. As the delinquent enters the court room, the intake officer evaluates the case and refers the youth to social services or juvenile court. If it is a serious crime, the juvenile will be detained in a detention center, group home, shelter, or half-way house. There is no bail for juvenile offenders (The Juvenile Justice System, 2007). For gang related offenses by a minor, the juvenile court judge weighs the probability that the delinquent has the ability to be rehabilitated. If the offender has a charge related to serious violence and/or a history of incidents, the probability that the juvenile will go to adult court is high (United States Department of Justice, 2009).

There are three types of sentencing with the justice system: probation, suspended sentence, and sentence. Probation allows a defendant a chance to reform without going to jail. Probation time is prescribed by the judge for a certain length of time and it entails meetings with a probation officer, participation in self-help programs, drug and alcohol checks, etc. A suspended sentence is giving an offender one more chance. The judge will outline the sentence the offender will have if he or she is charged again. A sentence is sending an offender to jail.

In concert with the juvenile justice system, school systems must articulate a behavior code to ensure a safe and disciplined learning environment. The local school boards and administrators have developed numerous behavior codes and consequences for students in their effort to suppress or remediate poor and violent behavior, which is often associated with gangs.

School District Discipline Policies

The evolution of policies and related purpose. In 1846, Horace Mann, a nineteenth-century education reformer, led a senate subcommittee to announce that a child who is under care of a sensible man, taught how to work hard, and furnished with a good education would have a ninety percent chance of being a good citizen (Anderson, 1998). In 1881, the National Education Association claimed that public high schools are the most powerful tool to root up delinquency and lessen crime. The idea that schools are an antidote for delinquency continued into the twentieth century. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice proclaimed the school was the public tool to develop young people into law abiding citizens committed to the goals and values of American Society (Anderson, 1998).

In the 1970s, a concern about the safety of schools led to a congressional study. The Safe School Study Report prepared for Congress by the National Institute of Education reported that 13 percent of the juniors and seniors in high schools per month were victims of crimes such as robbery, assault, and larceny (Anderson, 1998). They also reported that over three million students avoided certain locations within a school for fear of attack and over five million who were in fear at school every day. With the crack cocaine era of the 1980s and 1990s, community and school violence increased dramatically and prompted two studies by the Center for Disease and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC, with the support of the U.S. Department of Education and Justice, conducted a study on school violence (Department of Health, 2001). The study was conducted from July 1992 to June 1994 that investigated 68 students who were killed on and near school or during a school-related event. A large majority of the victims were male and killed by guns. The study found that the homicide rate of urban schools was

nine times greater than the rate in rural schools. Students at the highest risk of school-associated violent death during that time period were males from racial minority groups and under 20 years old. The most predominate motive was a gang-related activity or interpersonal conflict. During this time period, the concern over school safety reached new levels and caused the sitting President and governors to articulate a set of national goals for education to be reached by the year 2000 (Centers for Disease, 2000).

Goal 6 called for schools to be free from drugs and violence while offering a safe and disciplined learning environment (Anderson, 1998). In 1994, Congress passed the Gun Free Schools Act. This statute made each school expel a student for a minimum of one year regardless of the discipline history of the student (Martinez, 2009).

Following the shooting at Columbine High School, school districts discipline policies evolved into more punitive measures for student misbehavior. Zero tolerance policies were adopted by many schools; such policies which allowed school administrators to suspend or expel students for acts of violence or serious crime regardless of the students' discipline history. Supporters of zero-tolerance policies believe that these types of policies will stop misbehavior and deter others from misbehaving. Opponents argue that zero tolerance policies increase out-of-school suspension, particularly among minority students (Blomberg, 2004). A study by Anthony Adams (1992) noted that schools with violent students tend to use more punitive zero tolerance measures to suppress misbehavior than less violent schools. The study also concluded that urban schools are much more likely to use zero tolerance policies than suburban schools. Violence and serious crimes are often connected to gang members.

The school systems from the study sample each have mandatory suspensions for gang-related behaviors.

Gang-related policies from study sample school districts. School boards, along with administrators, have created many policies to address inappropriate behavior. As the focus of this study will be on the gang policies, school districts have school discipline policies directed toward suppressing gang-related behavior. The following is an overview of those policies.

The common theme of the school districts is represented by the discipline codes of some of the participating districts. For example, one district defines a gang as “any group or association of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, which encourages, solicits, promotes, urges, counsels, furthers, advocates, condones, assists, causes, advises, procures, or abets any illegal or disruptive activity or behavior of any kind, whether on or off school campuses or school property” (Fulton County School District, 2008, Rule 17).

School districts also articulate specific gang related actions that are prohibited. The Bartow County school district specifically says in their student handbook that gang activity includes, membership in a gang, wearing clothing or symbols that are gang-related, possessing gang paraphernalia, conducting gang signals, threatening or intimidating students or staff, recruiting, gathering, and defacing school property (Bartow County School District, n.d.a).

The policies of two of the districts are almost identical and outline the following as illegal gang actions that can be addressed by administration: no student shall engage in any activity while participating in a gang which interferes with the orderly conduct of

school activities, with discipline in the schools, or with the rights of other students or faculty members; no student shall display identified gang tattoos, hold himself/herself out as a member of a gang, and/or recruit or solicit membership in any gang or gang-related organization; and no student shall engage in any other gang-related behavior which is subversive to good order and discipline in the schools, even though such behavior is not specified in the preceding text.

Legal Concerns for School Systems: First and Fourteenth Amendments

In the effort of school districts addressing gang-related activity with their gang-related discipline codes, offenders have often sued school districts claiming that their constitutional rights have been violated. The United States Constitution provides equal rights to all citizens regardless if they are in a gang. As is outlined in the following material, school officials have to ensure that student rights are protected as they go through the discipline process. Even so, there have been many suits filed against school districts in which students in a gang or alleged to be in a gang having claimed their First Amendment and/or the Fourteenth Amendment rights were violated.

The two main areas of dispute for the First Amendment surround the guarantees of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. In 1969, a landmark case, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, had a profound impact on the rights of students within public schools. The case involved a group of students who wore black arm bands to school in a silent protest against the war in Vietnam (Weldon, Petrie, & Lindauer, 2001). The students were suspended from school for three days as a result of their silent expression. The ruling of the court was that students do not shed their constitutional rights when they enter the school building. As long as the rights of other

students and staff are not violated and the action does not cause school disruption, then the actions are protected by the First Amendment. This ruling forced school administrators to further investigate incidents of student speech and expression to ensure they did not impose on the First Amendment rights of their students. Basically, if there was no reason to believe the speech or expression would cause disruption in the school, then administrators could not interfere.

A popular method used by school administrators to control student behavior and expression is implementation of a dress code. Dress codes outline the types of clothing and accessories that are allowed and not allowed at school. For example, in Douglas County School District located in Georgia, the dress code requirements state that all students must dress in a manner that is beneficial to the good learning environment. In the selection of school dress, the district encourages the parents and students to exercise good taste and good judgment. The dress code continues as follows:

Many 'fads' in dress is not appropriate for school. Therefore, student dress should reflect neatness, cleanliness and should not distract or cause disruption in the educational process of school. The school administration reserves the right to determine if a student's dress, hairstyle, etc. are too casual, too revealing, or too distracting from the learning environment to be considered appropriate for school. The health and safety of all students will be taken into consideration when making decisions regarding appropriate/inappropriate attire including the tucking in of shirt tails" (Douglas County School district, 2008, Administrative Regulation JCDB-R1).

School district lists are typically extensive in an effort to exhaustively identify inappropriate clothing and accessory items. Gang members express their allegiance and partnership in their gangs through a variety of ways including their fashion decisions. The key issue that is often challenged by students against dress codes is the vagueness of the dress code policy. Students claim their freedom of speech is compromised when certain types of dress or fashion accessories are banned from school because of their perceived connection to gangs. Under the First Amendment, freedom of expression is associated with freedom of speech as is the case with a person's dress. Even when confronted with a policy as detailed as the Douglas County School Districts dress code, students still find grounds for dispute. Gang members are good at adjusting their dress to conform to existing dress codes; this, in turn, forces schools to adjust their policies further.

In *Jeglin v. San Jacinto Unified School District*, a high school from the San Jacinto Unified School District also had a problem with gang activity (Weldon, Petrie, & Lindauer, 2001). As part of the gang membership, gang participants wear jerseys and shirts from college and professional sport teams. In response to this fashion statement, the district's dress code banned students from wearing college and professional sport jerseys and shirts on school grounds or at school events. The court ruled in favor of the school district because of the documented gang activity within the school and the connection to the jersey and shirts. However, for the elementary and middle schools in the district, the dress code limitation could not be enforced as there were no documented cases of gang-related incidents.

In *Bivens vs. Albuquerque Public Schools* in New Mexico, the courts upheld the school's policy against sagging pants (Weldon, Petrie & Lindauer, 2001). The school had a documented problem with gangs, and in particular, the connection of sagging pants to individuals who participate in gang activity. The origin of the rule against sagging pants was to limit or prevent situations of school disruption due to gang-related dress. The court ruled that for a student to declare free speech for a nonverbal act, the student must be able to articulate the intent of the message and that it is not a threat to good order of the school. The court continued by saying that every defiant act by a student cannot be protected by free speech.

The religious aspect of the First Amendment possesses more concerns for schools and dress codes, as illustrated case of *Chalifoux v. New Caney Independent School District* (Holmes, 1998). New Caney is located about 30 miles outside of Houston. At the time of the case, New Caney did not have a documented gang problem. However, the school district's dress code did not allow students to wear any gang-related apparel at school or at any school events. New Caney school leaders believed that rosaries worn on the outside of the shirt were gang-related and warned students this type of accessory could not be worn at school or at any school events. The school district made their decision to ban rosaries after consulting with local law enforcement for guidance on what apparel and accessories are gang related.

David Chalifoux and Jerry Robertson were two students attending high school in the New Caney School District. They were practicing Catholics and very proud of their faith. As part of their faith, they wore white plastic rosaries as necklaces in their preparation for confirmation. Upon the decision of the school to ban rosaries worn

outside the shirt, Chalifoux claimed this policy change violated his freedom of speech. Chalifoux argued that the dress code did not specifically articulate that rosaries are banned and that he was not in fact a gang member (Holmes, 1998).

The court decision went against the New Caney School District and determined that wearing of the rosaries by Chalifoux was protected. In their decision, the court said that most people would understand that the boys were Christian because of the crucifix at the center of rosary. There had not been any previous accounts of school disruption caused by the rosaries and wearing the rosaries did not invade the rights of others. Furthermore, in the state of Texas, only the Board of Trustees could make or change school policy, not a law enforcement officer (Holmes, 1998).

There have also been a number of court cases connected to gang-related activity where students have claimed their Fourteenth Amendment rights have been violated. The Fourteen Amendment affirms that every United States citizen will not be deprived of life, liberty, or property without the due process of law (Taylor, 2009). In *Coronado v. Valleyview Public School District* (2008), the plaintiff argued that his right to due process was violated. Following a fight between rival gangs at a high school in the Valleyview Public High School, Coronado was charged with a two semester expulsion. Coronado contended that the school did not provide him due notice when the school presented a second school charge at the discipline hearing. The court said that same day notification passed constitutional requirements. Coronado also claimed that the school system did not provide an interpreter for his father. Through hearing records, it was clear that the father was quite fluent in English and participated in questioning of the hearing officer during the hearing. In summation, the court supported the school's effort to address gang

activity and placing Coronado back in the school would undermine the school's authority.

In summary, courts traditionally support the school's efforts to address gang-related activity. It is incumbent on the school administrators to honor the constitutional rights of the students as they go through the discipline process. The relationship of the schools and the juvenile justice system is the topic of the next section.

The Relationship of the Juvenile Justice System and School Systems

The overall goal of the juvenile justice system is to prevent a delinquent juvenile from becoming an adult criminal. The juvenile justice system provides support for delinquent youth and communities in many areas, such as providing a probation officer to monitor and support delinquents, offering mental health services, sponsoring anticrime and violence community programs, and supporting school programs via presentations and educational material against truancy, drugs and alcohol, gang membership, and drop-outs (Bilchik, 1999).

The mission for the education system is to prepare children to be productive law abiding citizens. In Georgia specifically, the mission is to "graduate all of Georgia's public school students with a meaningful diploma based upon rigorous standards delivered by an effective workforce" (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.a., Mission). School districts also provide students with resources and support programs as they go through the education process. A common thread between the juvenile justice system and school systems is addressing delinquent students and in particular, gang members.

The courts are typically supportive of the school districts when it comes to violence and gang affiliation. Courts typically support stiff consequences from school

when it involves school safety, as is illustrated by the landmark case *Fuller v. Decatur Public School Board* (2000).

The plaintiffs claimed their right of due process was violated because of the phrase “gang-like activity” in the school system’s discipline code was vague. The incident that caused the proceeding was a fight that occurred during a high school football game between two rival street gangs from the Decatur, Illinois, area. The gangs were identified by local law enforcement as the Vice Lords and the Gangster Disciples. Six students were suspended for their role in the fight and were afforded the opportunity to attend alternative schools. The suspensions gained national headlines as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition addressed the board. The court ruled ultimately in favor of the school district. The school behavior code outlined gang-like activity as conduct by a student on behalf of any gang, to perpetuate the gang’s existence, and to represent affiliation of membership in a gang. The student’s conscious decision to participate in a fight with two gang rivals as documented by local law enforcement supports all three of these gang definitions in the school behavior code. Through investigation following the melee, there was plenty of evidence through student and law enforcement interviews to prove the fight was gang-related.

Another common concern of the juvenile justice system and the school system is school dropout rates. Eighty percent of all juvenile and adult criminals have experienced failure in school, been suspended or expelled from school and dropped out of school. As a result, a number of states are changing their adult age policy. In early 2008, Connecticut changed its policy of charging 16 and 17-year-olds as adults. Connecticut has one of the largest populations of inmates under the age of 18. Toni Walker, a

Representative of Connecticut, claims that the public did not understand that a small minority of around three percent were dangerous delinquents (Hammond, 2008). The majority of the crimes were minor non-violent offenses such as disorderly conduct and drugs-related violations. The main reason the lawmakers changed their minds about the minimum age to be considered an adult within the court system was the increased dropout rate associated with adolescents who were being charged as adults. Once the young people get caught within the adult court system, a majority of them drop out of high school. The intent of Connecticut lawmakers was to create safer neighborhoods by empowering the juvenile justice system to use education and treatment toward youth instead of punishment. However, the state has asserted that it will still hold its youth accountable, and dangerous delinquents will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law (2008).

Bilchik (1999) reported that in general, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) encourages discipline programs that promote positive discipline practices and discourages programs that emphasize external control of youth, high police presence, restrictive settings, and exclusion, which are tactics that many public middle and high school utilize to keep their schools safe. With this in mind, it is instructive to examine an illustrative policy from one on the present study's sample districts.

A common consequence administered by schools for gang-related activity is out-of-school (OSS); this sanction is evident in the policies of six school districts targeted for this study. One district classifies gang-related activity as a level two violation within their behavior code. A level two violation is considered very serious and results in

consequences ranging from counseling to OSS for 10 days for a first offense. For gang-related activity, local law enforcement and the district attorney would also be notified. Another district offers a detailed range of consequences that represents the common theme across the six school districts represented in the study. The following is an overview of the consequences used by administrators in this district and is illustrative of the types of consequences for gang-related activity among the sample districts:

First Offense:

- Minimum of five (5) days out-of-school suspension.
- Maximum of ten (10) days out-of-school suspension with a recommendation for long-term suspension/expulsion for a specified time.

Second Offense:

- Minimum of ten (10) days out-of-school suspension.
- Maximum is a recommendation for long-term suspension/expulsion for a specified time.

Third and Subsequent Offenses:

- Ten (10) days out-of-school suspension with a recommendation for long-term suspension for at least the remainder of the current semester, up to permanent expulsion.

Even a cursory examination of the policy suggests a heavy reliance on exclusion from school as a disciplinary tool. District administrators, however, might assert that there are limited tools available to them, thus preventing a potential conflict with the juvenile justice system. The question that the juvenile justice system and the school district face is discerning the point at which school safety is compromised in the effort to

rehabilitate delinquent youth. The principal's perspectives on the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies were the main focus of this study and the topic of the next section.

Principal Perceptions

Middle and high school principals have extensive and direct responsibilities for controlling gang-related activity in schools. There is limited research on the perceptions of the principal in regards to the quality of policies that address gang activity; however, there have been some surveys that report perceptions of discipline policies and the associated consequences for school violence, which is often related to gang activity.

Skiba and Edl (2004) studied the perceptions of Indiana's principals regarding the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion. A survey was completed by 325 principals across the state of Indiana. The results showed the principals were divided into three groups. One group favored less restrictive measures and focused on rehabilitative interventions such as small group meetings and character education programs. They believed that their objective was to teach proper behavior and regardless of the offense, all students should stay in school. The second group of principals advocated the zero tolerance perspective. They believed a strong stance against discipline problems would create a better learning environment. They also believe that teachers did not have time to incorporate prevention programs and suspension was the best tool to address inappropriate behavior. The third group of principals believed that suspension is an effective deterrent of future behavior but also utilized preventative measures. They also believed that taking time at school on teaching appropriate behavior could be beneficial

to the culture of the school. These principals also felt their schools had a handle on school violence and that their teachers were well versed in classroom management.

Overall, about two-thirds of the principals preferred a more preventative approach and believed that it was more effective than merely suspending or expelling a student. The attitude of the principal has a significant impact in the amount of suspension that occurs. Most importantly, 98.8 percent of the principals believed that getting to know the students is an important part of the discipline process. Furthermore, ethnicity of the principal had little impact on the data and male principals favored more restrictive than preventative measures.

Linda Clark (2000) studied the perspectives of Georgia middle school principals on the effectiveness of strategies used to deter gang-related activity. The results showed that the principals thought the 14 gang-related policies were effective in their districts. However, only half the principals experienced gang-related incidents in their schools. A majority also believed that the board policies need to be reactive as gang-related problems arise.

The National School Boards Association in response to school violence launched a survey on school culture in 1993 and included principals (Anderson, 1998). In one part of the survey, principals were asked about the effectiveness of school discipline policies in preventing violence. A great majority of the respondents reported that OSS and expulsion were the answer to consequences for school violence, but a majority also reported that it was ineffective. One participant reported that allowing a student to stay home, sleep in, and watch TV is not effective punishment. Another participant wrote that

suspensions do not work because students do not care about being out of school (Anderson, 1998).

The National Center for Education Statistics, which is supported by the Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools of United States Department of Education, conducts a survey that has been given sporadically since the 1999-2000 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). As part of its survey, public school principals are asked about the frequency of violent acts, which include thefts, robberies, and physical attacks. The survey also seeks input from principals on discipline actions and discipline policies implemented to limit crime in schools. Although the survey did not specifically target gang activity, the results from the 2007-2008 survey did show three factors that limited the efforts of schools to prevent crime. The three factors that were reported to limit schools' ability to decrease or prevent crime were "a lack of or inadequate alternative placements or programs for disruptive students; inadequate funds; and federal, state, or district policies on disciplining special education students" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, p. 4).

Each of the six school districts participating in the current study utilizes out-of-school suspension (OSS) and expulsion to address offenders of the gang policy. According to research, the effect of OSS as a tool for eliminating misconduct is not strong. In a study of 252 students who were suspended during their school career, 69 percent of those surveyed felt the suspension did nothing to change their behavior and 32 percent predicted they would be suspended out of school again (Costenbader & Markson, 1997). There is little evidence, according to Morrison and Skiba (2001) that supports that students who are suspended avoid further suspension. Students, who are at risk for

suspension, often have difficult home lives and dangerous peers groups. The act of suspension and keeping the student at home can create more problems for the student (Blomberg, 2004). In the sample population, two school districts have a minimum five day suspension for a first incident of a gang-related offense. All six counties use out-of-school suspension for first time gang-related policy offenders.

Since 1994, a zero tolerance mentality has grown to include many areas of school discipline beyond gun offenses, the misconduct with which it was historically associated. The Gun Free Schools Act was the first instance in which federal policy intervened in local school administrators' discipline decisions in school (Martinez, 2009). The NAACP has coined the phrase "School to Prison Pipeline" in response to zero-tolerance policies (Martinez, 2009). Basically, the NAACP, as well as other experts, believes that zero-tolerance policies effectively remove delinquent children from the mainstream education system toward a road of incarceration. A majority of these students are poor and minority students. The NAACP believes that administrators hide behind zero-tolerance policies because they do not want to take time through prevention programs to help these delinquents change their behavior.

As gangs infiltrate schools, research suggests that school administrators often fail to realize when a gang problem is developing or present; they often dismiss gang-like behavior as the actions of students who want to be in a gang. Typically, it is too late to stop the problem. At this point, the atmosphere of the school becomes contentious between the students and the adults (Thompkins, 2000). In particular, gang activity is met with consequences that are meant to suppress the behavior. Some observations further suggest that students targeted for disciplinary reform can internalize the discipline

aimed at them, and while for some this may lead to self-regulation and complicity, for others it could produce resistance and disengagement from school (Morris, 2005). The research suggesting the limitation of OSS effectiveness in altering student behavior could provide insight into the perceptions of the principal. As illustrated in the opening scenario from Chapter I, two students returning from long term OSS reverted back to their violent behavior. To assist principals in addressing gang-related behavior, legal action can be taken against the offender.

Legal sanctions prescribed by the juvenile justice department can range from probation to incarceration. Courts can also impose fines and require community service. As part of probation, the courts will mandate that the juveniles attend school and follow all school rules. Administrators are encouraged to contact a child's probation officer if the juvenile breaks a discipline policy. Gang-affiliated students often get arrested as part of their consequence, especially if violence, drugs, or weapons are involved. According to Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber (2004), arrests that may be a part of the consequence for gang activity at schools do little to alter the behavior of delinquents. Results from the Denver Youth Survey of 1987, indicated delinquent behavior often increased after an arrest. Research also suggests that youth who are incarcerated are more likely to be locked-up as adults. However, the removal of the juvenile delinquent from perpetrating more violent acts on the streets does favor the rationale for incarceration, which is to ensure public safety (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004). Furthermore, it may be more productive for the juvenile justice system to use gang membership as an indicator of more serious delinquent behavior in the future and place

these children in a serious program for delinquents (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 2004).

Summary

Although research is unclear about the perceptions of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies, the consequences of OSS and expulsion for students have stirred much debate. In concert with the juvenile justice system, school systems should articulate a behavior policy to ensure a safe and disciplined learning environment. Local school boards and administrators have developed numerous behavior policies and consequences for students in their effort to suppress or remediate poor behavior. The effectiveness of the behavior policies is critical in the principal's efforts to keep schools safe and high-performing.

For the purposes of this study, the perspectives of current middle and high school principals on gang-related discipline policies were investigated. The behavior theories illustrated in Chapter II provide a foundation for understanding what drives the development of human behavior and in particular delinquent behavior. The behavior theories report a number of variables that occur in a child's life that influence his or her behavior. It was documented through research studies that behavior change can be learned through interactions from their peers and adults they associate with, as well as, from the environment they live.

Officials within the juvenile justice system typically believe that delinquent children should be afforded the opportunity to rehabilitate as part of their discipline process. School systems predominantly use OSS consequences to expulsion for gang-related activity and favor removal of gang-related students to provide a safe environment

for the rest of the population. School administrators face the challenge of figuring out at what point is rehabilitation by affording a child the opportunity to stay in school putting other students in the school at risk of harm.

This study targeted five research questions to determine if gang-related discipline policies are adequate as perceived by principals. The first question asked for the perspectives of local principals regarding the quality of policies that address gang activity. In other words, the question examined whether the consequences for gang-related behavior causes an emotional response that changes the behavior of a delinquent student from future delinquent behavior as observed by middle and high school principals.

The second question asked if the demographics of the community served by the schools impact the perspective of the principals. The theories provided in Chapter II, more specifically the social disorganization theory, show strong evidence that the stability of the community and its leaders, along with the relationships of the citizens has a profound impact on the level of delinquent behavior and potential for gang-related crimes. This would suggest that principals whose schools are in areas that meet the characteristics of a socially disorganized community with a high rate of gang-related activity would have stronger opinions regarding the effectiveness of the gang-related policy due to the increased number of incidents for which he or she would have to invoke the gang-related discipline policies.

Question three asked if there was a relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at the school and perspectives of principals regarding the quality of gang-related policies. This question's goal was to determine if principals who deal with

gang-related policy consistently have a different view than principals in a low gang-related incidents school.

The fourth question addressed the issue of whether gang-related policies allow the principal to appropriately address gang-related acts in relation to their severity in the school. In other words, when a particular gang-related activity reaches a critical disturbance of the school culture, such as multiple gang fights on school grounds due to increased turf issues, the perspective of the principal might change in regards to adequacy of the gang-policy.

The final question sought to discover suggestions from current principals on the improvements they would suggest in regards to district discipline policies related to gang affiliation. Chapter III discusses how the methodology for the study was organized in order to answer the four research questions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level the means to keep their schools safe. Middle and high school principals from four school districts in the southeastern United States participated in the study. Feedback was sought concerning the principals' perspectives on the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies, school demographic information, the presence of gang-related activity, and the number of gang-related incidents at the school. The researcher also queried principals about their recommendations regarding policies for gang-related activity.

Chapter III lists research questions, hypotheses, and the dependent and independent variables that were addressed in this study. This is followed by a description of the participants in the study, a review of the data collection process, and a description of the survey instrument (Appendix A) and interview instrument (Appendix B). The validity and reliability of the survey instrument are also discussed in the chapter. The chapter concludes with a description of the procedures that were used to analyze data.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

To effectively address gang-related behavior, it is vital to have adequate discipline policies that allow the building principal to protect staff and students from violence and ensure a safe learning environment. Therefore, it is important to analyze existing gang-related policies and measure their effectiveness. The following research questions

examined the middle and high school principal's perspectives on current gang-related discipline policies:

1. What are the perspectives of local principals regarding the adequacy of policies that address gang activity?
2. Are there differences among the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies depending upon the demographic profiles and levels of their schools?
3. Is there a relationship between the numbers of gang-related incidents at the school and the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies?
4. Is there a relationship between the presence of gang-related activity and the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies?
5. What suggestions do current principals have for improving district discipline policy related to gang affiliation?

The hypotheses for these questions are as follows:

H₁: The relationship between principal perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies and demographic profiles is related to the level of the school.

H₂: There is an inverse relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at a school and the extent to which principals perceive that gang-related policies are adequate.

H₃: There is an inverse relationship between the severity of gang-related incidents and the perspectives of principals regarding the quality of gang-related policies.

Participants in the Study

District superintendents from six school districts located in the southeastern United States were approached with a request to allow their principals to participate in the study. The districts were selected based on their rich demographic diversity. Four out of the six school districts gave permission to contact the principals and conduct the research study. Consequently, out of the 111 principals in the six school districts, 79 principals in the four accessible school districts were available to participate in this study. Both districts that denied access for this study indicated that the number of studies already being conducted in the district was already extensive and the timeline for access had passed for the year. Of the 79 principals in the four participating school districts, 43 (54 %) principals responded to the survey.

After completed surveys were received, two middle and two high school principals with low rates of gang-related activity and two middle and two high school principals with high rates of gang-related activity were selected to participate in an interview. Seven out of the eight school principals who agreed to participate in the survey came from one school district. The selection protocol for the interview sample population was based on the total number of gang related-incidents for the past three years at each school. After calculating the total number of gang-related incidents for each school, the middle and high schools were ranked on two separate lists from the lowest incidents of gang-related activity to highest incidents of gang-related activity. From the two lists, the researchers sought permission to interview principals from the two middle and high schools with the lowest number of gang-related incidents and from the two middle and high schools with the highest number of gang-related incidents. Only

one principal from the middle school list ranked high in gang-related incidents did not respond. At that point, the next principal from a middle school in the ranking was solicited to interview. The final list of middle and high school principals based on number of gang-related incidents contained seven principals from one school district.

To establish face validity of the interview and survey instrument, the researcher consulted a panel of experts to review the instruments and provide feedback. The panel of experts included two middle school principals, one high school principal, a superintendent, a discipline policy supervisor from a school district, and Diane Clark, former middle school principal and author of a dissertation on Georgia middle school principals' perceptions of strategies that may be effective in deterring gang-related activity. The protocol for and results of this review are described in the section on instrumentation.

Research Design and Procedures

Research Design

The study involved a mixed methodology with a survey instrument that included quantitative items and an interview instrument that included qualitative questions posed to a subset of the sample of principals. The rationale for using a mixed method was to ensure a more comprehensive approach to obtaining information about principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies. Often, as is so in this case, neither quantitative nor qualitative data are sufficient alone (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

The specific mixed method design used in the study was a sequential explanatory mixed method design that consists of two phases (Creswell, 2003). In the first phase,

quantitative numeric data were collected via a survey instrument. The goal of the first phase was to discover predictive power of specified variables outlined by the hypotheses. In the second phase, qualitative data were extracted from eight interviews. The goal of the second phase was to provide a more in-depth examination of the perceptions about associated variables among a sample of principals who were surveyed. The results of both phases were then integrated into the discussion of the whole study.

Before the surveys were sent, a panel of experts was consulted. The surveys and interview questions were edited based upon feedback provided by these respondents as outlined in the section on instrumentation. Data were gathered from the completed surveys and interviews. The Internal Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi approved the study after receiving confirmation of cooperation from the participating school districts.

Variables in the Study

The variables for this study were middle and high school principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related school discipline policies that were operationalized through response scores from the related section of the survey and interview instrument, demographic profiles of the principals and student sample, levels of schools, principal perception of the presence of gang activity in their respective school, numbers of gang-related incidents, and perceptions of principals regarding adequacy of gang-related policies. Table 4 outlines the specific questions on the survey and interview instrument that related to the corresponding variables.

Table 4

Quantitative and Qualitative Variables and Corresponding Question(s)

Variables	Questions(s) on Survey	Question(s) on Interview
Demographic profiles	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	
Levels of school	2	
Principal perception of presence of gang-related incidents in their respective school	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19	
Numbers of gang-related incidents at the school	28	
Perspectives of principals regarding adequacy of gang-related policies	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
Principal recommendation for improving current district gang-related policies.		6

Instrumentation

A survey was developed to assess demographic information, the presence of gang activity at schools, principal perceptions of the effectiveness of policies regarding gang activity, and the number of gang-related incidents. The survey instrument is included as Appendix A.

The qualitative interview items are located in Appendix B. Structured interview items consisted of six questions designed to provide further insight into principals' perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related policy and elicit suggestions that the participating principals had for improving district gang-related discipline policies. The

principals were divided into the following four groups: two middle school principals with low rates of gang-activity, two middle school principals with high rates of gang-activity, two high school principals with low rates of gang-activity, and two high school principals with high rates of gang activity. The rates of incidents that were used to determine which principals were selected to be interviewed were identified by comparing the total number of gang-related incidents for the past three years of the completed surveys.

Validity and Reliability. Face validity of the interview and survey instrument was established by feedback from a panel of experts. The panel of experts included two middle school principals, one high school principal, a superintendent, a discipline policy supervisor from a school district, and Diane Clark, former middle school principal and author of a dissertation on Georgia middle school principals' perceptions of strategies that may be effective in deterring gang related activity. The six participants were provided a copy of the survey and interview instruments and asked to review each survey question using the following five questions to guide feedback:

1. Do the demographic, gang presence on school grounds, and principal perception of gang-related discipline policies categories fit the questions?
2. Are there any questions that you were unable to answer because the wording was confusing?
3. Were there any questions that seemed unrelated to my topic (perceptions about the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies)?
4. Are there any questions that should be added to better assess this topic?

5. Are there additional questions that need to be added to the interview sections (last section) in order to adequately assess perceptions about the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies?

All experts agreed that all of the survey instrument categories fit the questions asked on question number 1. For question number 2, a number of comments were proposed to improve the clarity of the survey instrument. Survey question number 8 responses were changed from “lower”, “middle”, and “upper class” to “up to 25%”, “25% to 50%”, and “above 50%” as to indicate the percentage of the school’s student population on free and reduced lunch. This response modification provided the responders a more precise measure to select when answering question 8. Question number 28 was also edited from “What were the annual average numbers of incidents?” to “What were the annual numbers of incidents?” The average number of incidents should not have been the intent of the question. Question 28 originally sought the average number of gang-related incidents for the past three years. Question 28 was modified to ask for the number of incidents for the past three years and specifically lists gang-related activity and behaviors associated with gang-related activity. There were no suggestions identified by the panel of experts related to questions number 3 and number 4.

Question number 5 from the panel of experts’ questionnaire sought feedback related to the interview protocol. One panel expert provided specific feedback that was used to modify the interview instrument by adding the phrase “explain and provide examples” at the end of each question. The final drafts of the survey and interview instruments are located in Appendices A and B respectively.

Chronbach's alpha was conducted following the collection of completed surveys to measure internal consistency for the Gang Presence construct and for the Principal's Perspectives constructs. The alpha coefficient for the Gang Presence construct was .93, suggesting that the items have a relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the Principal's Perspectives construct was .85, suggesting that these items also have relatively high internal consistency.

Item total correlations were computed between each item and in both the Gang Presence and Principals Perspective constructs and the total for all items in those constructs without the item being correlated. These correlations indicate whether each item discriminates between its parent construct and the other construct. Items that discriminate have higher correlations with item totals for the parent construct and lower correlations with item totals for other constructs. That was the pattern for these items, as can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5

Principal's Perspectives Item Descriptives and Item Total Correlation (N = 19)

	Mean	SD	Range	R of item with domain	R of item with other domain
Gangs are present in my school.	2.44	1.30	4	.802	.090
Gangs at my school have a negative impact on student achievement	2.00	1.29	4	.759	-.030
My students are aware of gang activity in my school	2.60	1.28	4	.756	.122
My teachers are aware of gang activity in my school.	2.53	1.26	4	.582	.202
My gang-related students bring violence to my school	1.70	1.04	4	.750	-.130
My gang-related students use drugs	2.09	1.17	4	.734	-.147
A significant number of my students wear gang-related clothing and accessories	1.42	.82	4	.399	.018
A significant number of my students use gang-related hand signals	1.60	.96	4	.729	-.065
Gangs bring disorderly conduct to my school	1.93	1.16	4	.795	-.135
Gang-related students have identifying tattoos at my school.	1.72	1.03	4	.704	-.002
Gang members recruit new members at my school.	2.07	1.18	4	.829	.049
My school districts gang policies are clearly written.	4.00	.98	4	.601	-.156
My school district's gang policies cover all areas of gang activity	3.42	1.14	4	.701	.039
Gang policies at my school are strictly enforced.	4.58	.663	3	.441	.030
Suspensions out-of-school are effective consequences for gang-related behavior.	3.58	1.40	4	.555	.074
Suspensions of gang-related students prevent future gang-related misbehavior.	2.93	1.37	4	.633	-.165
My district's gang policies allow for appropriate consequences that support the goal of a safe learning environment.	4.00	1.13	4	.788	-.067
Disciplinary measures allowed by the district are appropriate to the severity of the incident.	4.14	.97	3	.662	.133
My school involves the campus security officer in all school gang-related incidents.	4.63	1.05	4	.453	.171

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Data Collection Process

After consent was granted to the researcher by the four school districts, approval was given by the Internal Review Board (Appendix C). Participating school districts' middle and high school principals were mailed a permission letter (Appendix D) and a survey instrument. The survey and permission letters were sent with a self-addressed return envelope. The surveys took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Follow-up emails and phone calls were conducted to encourage as many principals as possible to complete the survey. The surveys are now secure under lock and key at the researcher's home.

Once all surveys were completed, a smaller sample of eight principals was selected, based on the rates of gang-related activity in their schools, to participate in the interview. When the principal signed the consent form (Appendix E), an interview time was established. The interviews were tape recorded. All individual information is considered confidential and will not be shared with any district or university employee except as summary information. The information was analyzed and the results are presented in Chapter IV.

Analysis of Data

For the quantitative phase, Research Question 1 regarding the perspectives of local principals concerning the adequacy of policies that address gang activity, a descriptive table was generated, outlining percentages of each category of responses from the survey instrument Part III: Perceptions of Adequacy of Gang-Related Discipline Policies and Consequences. For Research Question 2, regarding the differences among the perspectives of principals on the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies

depending upon the demographic profiles and levels of their schools, a moderated multiple regression was conducted. For Research Question 3, concerning the relationship between the numbers of gang-related incidents at the school and perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies, a standard multiple regression was conducted. For Research Question 4, concerning the relationship between the presence of gang-related activity and perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies, a standard multiple regression was also conducted.

For the qualitative phase, Research Question 1 regarding the perspectives of local principals on the adequacy gang-related policy and Research Question 5 regarding suggestions of current principals for improving district gang-related policy were answered through an analysis of the responses to interview question number 6. Qualitative response coding and reporting methodologies were employed. The researcher used a thematic code development method to analyze the transcribed data from the tape recording of the interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In the first stage of coding, the researcher analyzed the transcript looking for primary themes connected to the conceptual framework of suggestions for improving gang-related discipline policy. For the second stage of coding, called axial coding, the researcher created categories from the common themes and looked for relationships in the coded data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The interview questions solicited a more in-depth look at principal perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related policies and the analysis provided recommendations for the improvement of district gang-related policies.

Summary

Gang-affiliated behavior on school grounds can negatively impact student achievement and the culture of the school. School systems have implemented a number of gang-related discipline policies in order to suppress gang-related activity. The results of the analysis of the middle and high school principal's responses to the survey and interview may provide insight into the adequacy of gang-related policies in restricting gang-related activity. Chapter IV provides the results of the analyses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Incidents of violence in schools are higher when gangs are present. According to Snyder and Sickmund (1999), schools where gangs are present have a higher victimization rate as compared to schools with minimal or no gang activity. The purpose of this study was to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school levels with the means to keep their schools safe from gang-related misconduct. Feedback on the association between the principals' perspectives on the adequacy of gang-related policy and the number of gang-related incidents at the school and principals' perceptions of gang presence was also investigated. The chapter concludes with the qualitative phase results.

Description of Respondents

Four out of the six school districts gave permission to contact the principals and conduct the research study. Consequently, out of the 111 principals in the six school districts, 79 principals in the four accessible school districts were available to participate in this study. Both districts that denied access for study indicated that the number of studies already being conducted in the district was already extensive and the timeline for access had passed for the year. Of the 79 principals in the four participating school districts, 43 (54 %) principals responded to the survey.

Table 6

Principal/School Demographic Frequencies and Percentages (N = 43)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	21	48.8
Female	22	51.2
Ethnicity		
African American	10	23.3
Caucasian	31	72.1
Hispanic	2	4.7
Education Level		
Master	4	9.3
Specialist	26	60.5
Doctorate	13	30.2
Years of Experience		
First Year	4	9.3
1 to 5 Years	18	41.9
6 to 10 Years	13	30.2
11 to 15 Years	6	14.0
16 Plus Years	2	4.7
Middle School Enrollment		
500-750 students	2	4.7
750-1000 students	13	30.2
1000-1250 students	10	23.3
Greater Than 1250 students	1	2.3
High School Enrollment		
1500-2000 students	8	18.6
2000-2500 students	7	16.3
Greater Than 2500 students	2	4.7
Economic Levels (% Free/Reduced Lunch)		
Less than 25%	13	30.2
25% to 50%	15	34.9
More than 50%	15	34.9

The participants for the qualitative phase of the research study consisted of eight principals who agreed to participate in the interview. The principals were selected based on the total number of gang-related incidents for the past three school years, specifically 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011. The eight principals were divided into four groups: two middle school principals with low rates of gang-activity, two middle school principals with high rates of gang-activity, two high school principals with low rates of gang-activity, and two high school principals with high rates of gang-activity. Table 7 represents the gang-related incident totals for the eight principals.

Table 7

Interview Participants and Gang-Related Incident Total for the Past 3 Years (N =8)

Principal Participant	Gender	School Size	Years Experience as Principal	Low or High Rate of Gang Activity and School Level	Number of Incidents for past 3 years
Principal 1	Female	1000-1250	10 to 15 Years	Low-Middle School	0
Principal 2	Female	750-1000	1	Low-Middle School	0
Principal 3	Male	1500-2000	6 to 10 Years	Low-High School	2
Principal 4	Male	2000-2500	1 to 5 Years	Low-High School	2
Principal 5	Male	1000-1250	6 to 10 Years	High-Middle School	20
Principal 6	Female	Over 2500	1 to 5 Years	High-Middle School	81
Principal 7	Female	1500-2000	6 to 10 Years	High-High School	78
Principal 8	Female	1500-2000	6 to 10 Years	High-High School	195

Results

Upon receipt of the 43 survey instruments, the researcher numbered each survey and calculated the total number of gang-related incidents per school. For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher used the total number of gang-related incidents from each school as a guide to select the principals to interview. For the quantitative portion of the study, raw data from the Likert type scale items 9 through 27 were entered into SPSS. The Likert scale used anchors beginning at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and ending at 5 (Strongly Agree). The demographic data were also entered, and the gang-related behavior incidents from question 28 were compiled and entered into SPSS. The following are the findings related to the study's 5 research questions.

Quantitative: Descriptives

Research Question 1 reads as follows: What are the perspectives of local principals regarding the adequacy of policies that address gang activity? The Principal's Perspective construct identifies the respondents' perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies and consequences. A Likert scale was used with anchors beginning at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and ending at 5 (Strongly Agree). A Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) score of .566 was calculated to identify the mean scores from each question that were significantly different from each other. Table 8 presents the results from the Tukey HSD range test analyzing questions 20 through 27.

Table 8

Tukey HSD: Questions 20 through 27 (N = 43)

Questions	Mean	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Mean		4.00	3.42	4.58	3.58	2.93	4.00	4.14	4.63
Question 20	4.00	-	NS	*	NS	*	NS	NS	*
Question 21	3.42		-	*	NS	NS	*	*	*
Question 22	4.58			-	*	*	NS	NS	NS
Question 23	3.58				-	*	NS	*	*
Question 24	2.93					-	*	*	*
Question 25	4.00						-	NS	*
Question 26	4.14							-	NS
Question 27	4.63								-

Note: NS = Not Significant and * = Significant

The results of the table present a number of interesting findings. Question 24's mean score ($M = 2.93$) was significantly different from 6 other questions of the Principal's Perspective construct and had the lowest mean value of the Principal's Perspective construct. Question 24 asked the participants their opinion on the effectiveness of out-of-school suspension in preventing future gang-related misbehavior. The low mean score along with the significant difference of mean score from six of the seven questions indicated a low confidence level of the participating principal in OSS as an effective consequence for gang-related activity.

Question 27's mean ($M = 4.63$) was statistically different from the mean of five of the survey questions from the Principal's Perspective construct and had the highest mean

score. Question 27 asked the participants if they included campus police in all school gang-related incidents. The high mean score along with the significant difference of mean score from five of the seven questions indicate a high confidence level in including campus police in all gang-related activities.

The following three survey questions each had 3 statistical mean score differences from the Principal's Perspective Construct: Question 21 ($M = 4.00$), Question 25 ($M = 4.00$), and Question 26 ($M = 4.14$). The mean scores indicate that the principal survey respondents agreed with each item.

Data Analysis

Research Question 2 read as follows: Are there differences among the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies depending upon the demographic profiles and levels of their schools? In order to address Research Question 2, a standard multiple regression was conducted. The Principal's Perspective construct was the dependent variable. The effects economic level, years' experience, school level, and enrollments were entered as predictors and accounted for 14 % of variance $F(4, 38) = 2.649$, $p = .048$. Although the group of demographic predictors explained a significant portion of variance in principal's perspectives, there were no unique predictors in that group.

Research Question 3 read as follows: Is there a relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at the school and perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies? A standard multiple regression was used to analyze the relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at a school and the extent

to which principals perceive the gang-related policies as adequate, covarying for the school demographics if necessary.

Four principals (three high school principals and one middle school principal) did not complete question 28. One of the high schools principals completed only two of the three years of data on gang-related incidents as the school is only two years old. There was no other pattern in this missing data.

The Principal's Perspective construct was the dependent variable in the standard multiple regression for this research question. In step one, years' experience, enrollment, school level, and economic level were entered into the model. In step two, the total incidents across each discipline category for the 2008, 2009, and 2010 school years were entered. The combined effects of the demographic variables accounted for 19 % of the variance $F(4, 34) = 1.969, p = .122$. The addition of gang-related activities did not result in a significant increase in Rsquare ($Rsq = .211, F(9, 25) = .93, p = .48$). The interactions of the years' experience, enrollment, school level, and economic level entered in step 2 accounted for 40 % of the variance $F(4, 25) = .252, p = .059$.

Research Question 4 read as follows: Is there a relationship between the presence of gang-related activity and the perspectives of principals regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies? A standard multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between the presence of gang-related incidents as perceived by the principal at a school and the extent to which principals perceive the gang-related policies as adequate covarying for the school demographics. The Principal's Perspective construct was the dependent variable. For step one, school demographics were entered ($Rsq = .218, F(4, 38) = 2.65, p = .048$). Entering a total score for items 9 through 19 indicating

principals' perspectives on the extent of gang-related activity in their schools in step two revealed no significant increase in Rsq ($Rsq = .054$, $F(1, 37) = 2.747$, $p = .106$).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative study addressed Research Question 1 on the principals' perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies and Research Question 5 regarding the suggestions of current principals for improving district discipline policy related to gang affiliation. The researcher added a qualitative portion to ensure a comprehensive look at the perspective of principals on the adequacy of gang-related policy and their suggestions for improving current district gang-related policy. For a more in-depth look, the researcher selected four principals with low rates of gang-related activity and four principals from with high rates of gang-related activity. A summary of the participant responses can be seen in Appendix F.

The first interview question asked: What are your opinions about out-of-school suspension as an effective measure in suppressing future gang-related behavior. As indicated in Appendix F, one general theme emerged from responses to this question, most eloquently articulated as follows: "it is not effective", "it doesn't work", and "I don't know what influence it would have on current gang members". Six of the eight principals cited OSS as not effective in impacting future gang-related activity. All four principals with high rates of gang-related activity stated that OSS allows for gang-related students to be on the streets, which perpetuates further gang-related activity.

The second interview question asked: Do current gang-related discipline policies put you in a position of being proactive or reactive to gang-related behavior? The general theme that surfaced as indicated in Appendix F was that the gang-related policy allows

principals to be both reactive and proactive as illustrated by the following responses: “reactive...the policy addresses behavior after it has happened,” to “proactive. . . . we communicate the policies. . . . the freshman know that if they are within the building if they do anything gang-related there will be consequences,” and “combination.”

The third interview question asked: What types of gang-related activity are most often repeated after the student serves his or her gang-related policy consequence? The theme that arose from six of the eight principals was that gang-related behavior is often repeated following a school disciplinary consequence. Their responses indicated in Appendix F ranged from gang-related drawings on notebooks” to “school disruption” and “gang-related fighting”.

The fourth interview question asked: Are there forms of gang-activity that are effectively suppressed by current gang-related district discipline policy? As indicated in Appendix F, responses from the participants ranged from “I think the policy has enough teeth” to “for us the policy works,” and “yes, on campus they are suppressed.” The principals stated that both implementing and communicating the gang-related policy helps suppress gang-related activity. One principal cited “drawing” and another principal said gang-related “clothing” is effectively suppressed. The general theme was that there are forms of gang-activity that are suppressed by current gang-related discipline policies.

The fifth interview question asked: Do current gang-related discipline policies in your district provide disciplinary interventions that address all types of gang-related incidents at your school? The general theme from responses from principals was that current discipline policies do provide discipline interventions for all types of gang-related

incidents. Interview participants' responses included "yes because those policies are divided up in a manner . . . so I think it is lineated" and "Yes, all of the gang behaviors are covered by district discipline policies" as indicated in Appendix F.

The sixth interview question asked: What suggestions do you have for improving district discipline policy related to gang-related behavior by students? One general theme that emerged was that education and communication about gangs along with implementing the policy would improve the effectiveness of the gang-related discipline policy. Principal responses as indicated in Appendix F were as follows:

"communication, the more times we reference it and the parents reference it and that the activity will not be tolerated", "help parents um who may be in denial that their child is in a gang and they don't know how to help. . .", and "these policies may be improved with the formation and input of a district-wide committee." One principal suggested "a formal class setting where consequenced gang-related students can learn about the risks of gang participation." Another principal from a high rate high school suggested a boot camp but noted that budgetary constraints would prevent that from happening. Seven of the eight principals had suggestions outside of restructuring the gang-related policies to improve their ability to address gang-related activity.

The first five question principal responses from the interview instrument generated five themes that focused on the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies. These themes have been categorized as Principals' Perspectives Regarding Gang Related Policy. Question 6 responses captured the general theme for improving current gang-related discipline policy effectiveness as reported by middle and high school principals. This theme has been categorized as Suggestions for Improving

Gang-Related Policy. Table 9 outlines the themes for each category and the frequency of the eight principal participants whose responses matched the identified general themes on Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency and Themes of the Qualitative Phase of the Study (N = 8)

Category	Theme	Number of Responses
Principals' Perspectives Regarding Gang-Related Policy	Current policies do provide total coverage of gang-related behavior	8
	Communication of gang-policy to students and parents helps suppress gang-related behavior.	8
	Gang-related behavior is repeated	6
	OSS not effective on suppression of future gang-related behavior	6
	Gang-related policy is both reactive and proactive	4
Suggestions for Improving Policy	Support strategies along with gang-related discipline policies would improve effectiveness	7

Summary

Upon receipt of the survey instruments, the researcher numbered and sorted them by school district. Out of the 79 principals in the four participating school districts, 25 middle school and 18 high school principals returned a completed survey for a 54 percent return rate. A majority of the principals were female (51.2%), most were Caucasian (72.1%), most had a specialist degree (60.5%), and most principals had between one and ten years experience as a principal (72.1%).

For the quantitative phase, the raw data from the survey were analyzed. A Tukey HSD measure noted significant differences between the means of questions 20 – 27. Question 24's ($M = 2.93$) mean was significantly different than six of the seven questions and had the most significantly different means than any other question. For Research Questions 2 through 4, only the demographic predictors as a whole had a statistically significant impact on the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policy. The number of gang-related incidents and the principals' perceptions of gang presence had no statistically significant influence on the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policy.

For the qualitative phase, eight principals selected in accordance with the number of gang-related incidents at the school for the past three years were interviewed. The principal responses were organized into two categories and corresponding themes were analyzed using a thematic code development method. Discussions from the results of this portion of the study are provided in Chapter V, along with recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perspectives of middle and high school principals regarding the effectiveness of current gang-related discipline policies. Middle and high school principals from four school districts located in the southeastern United States participated in the study. In Chapter IV, the quantitative results portion of this study identified principals' perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related policy as it related to demographic profiles, levels of school, principals' perception of gang presence, and numbers of gang-related incidents. The qualitative results portion of this study solicited a more in-depth look into the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policy and sought recommendations for improvement of gang-related policy. The intent of this research was to present principals' perspectives on their ability to keep their schools safe from gang-related behavior with current gang-related discipline policies and to provide recommendations to improve gang-related policy. This chapter discusses findings, presents conclusions, and makes recommendations for effective practice and future research.

Summary of Procedures

The data gathered from this research were obtained from 43 survey instruments submitted by middle school and high school principals from the southeastern United States. After permission was granted by the four school districts to conduct research in their school districts, approval was sought and granted by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Mississippi (Appendix C). Once all surveys were completed, a

smaller sample of eight principals was selected, based on the rates of gang-related activity in their schools, to participate in an interview. After permission was granted by the selected principals, the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Upon receipt of the survey instruments, the researcher numbered each survey and calculated the total number of gang-related incidents per school. For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher used the total number of gang-related incidents from each school as a guide to select the principals to interview. For the quantitative portion of the study, raw data from the Likert type scale items 9 through 27 were entered into SPSS. The data analysis began with the Descriptives tables outlining the demographic data and principals' perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related policy data. The researcher also presented a table outlining the demographic data of the principals who participated in the interview portion of the study.

Before any other statistical tests were performed, the Chronbach's alpha was conducted following the collection of completed surveys to measure internal consistency for the Gang Presence and for the Principals' Perspectives constructs. Item total correlations were also computed for each item and the total for other items in the Gang Presence Construct, each item and the total for the other items in the Principal's Perspective construct, and each item in both constructs were correlated with the total of all items from the other construct. The measure was conducted to see if an item was discriminating within its parent domain and the other domain.

For Research Question 1, a Tukey HSD score was calculated to compare the means of questions 20 – 27. The results identified the questions that had statistically

significant differences in their mean scores and were presented in a table. A standard multiple regression was conducted on Research Question 2 to analyze the relationship of the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policy and demographic profiles. For Research Question 3, a standard multiple regression was conducted to analyze the relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at the school and the perspectives of the principals on gang-related policy. For Question 4, a standard multiple regression was also conducted to measure the relationship of the presence of gang activity as perceived by the principal and the perspectives of the principals regarding the adequacy of the gang-related policy.

The qualitative portion of the research study addressed Research Question 1 on the principals' perspectives of the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies and Research Question 5 on suggestions from current middle and high school principals for improving district discipline policy related to gang affiliation. The researcher added a qualitative portion to ensure a comprehensive look at the perspective of a principal on the adequacy of gang-related policy. The researcher selected four principals with low rates of gang-related activity and four principals from schools with high rates of gang-related activity. The researcher used a thematic code development method to analyze the transcribed data from the tape recordings of the interviews.

Major Findings

The analysis of the survey and interview revealed a number of significant findings. From the quantitative phase of the study, Research Question 1, the low mean score along with the significant difference of mean score from six of the seven questions of the Principals Perception construct indicated a low confidence level of the

participating principals in OSS as an effective consequence for gang-related activity. The principals' responses from the survey reflect the current research on the effectiveness of out-of-school suspension (OSS). According to Morrison and Skiba (2001), there is little evidence that supports that students who are suspended avoid further suspension.

Students, who are at risk for suspension, often have difficult home lives and dangerous peers groups. The act of suspension and keeping the student at home can create more problems for the student (Blomberg, 2004).

This finding was further supported by the responses in the qualitative phase of the study. Interview Question 1 asked the participant his or her opinion about OSS as an effective measure in suppressing future gang-related behavior. The common theme from the responses was that OSS is not effective. Two participating principals specifically mentioned their concern about the students being put back on the streets where they could incite more problems. The concern of putting students back on the street was also reported by the 1993 National School Boards Association survey on school violence where one participant reported that allowing a student to stay home, sleep in, and watch TV is not effective punishment (Anderson, 1998).

Another significant finding from Research Question 1 was that principals include campus police in all school gang-related incidents. According to Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber (2004), arrests that may be a part of the consequence for gang activity at school do little to alter the behavior of delinquents. Results from the Denver Youth Survey of 1987, indicated delinquent behavior often increased after an arrest. Research also suggests that youth who are incarcerated are more likely to be locked-up as adults.

The results also indicate that the principals agree that current gang-related policies provide enough depth and breadth to address all gang activities. Question 25 asked if the respondent's district gang policies allow for appropriate consequences that support the goal of a safe learning environment. The results show that the principals believe that this is the case. This is also true for Question 26, which asked if disciplinary measures allowed by the district are appropriate to the severity of the incident. Overall, the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policy as it is written and its ability to address gang-related incidents was positively viewed by the participating principals. The consequence of OSS often associated with gang-related discipline policies is where the participants believe that gang-related policies need improvement.

The analysis associated with Research Question 2 disclosed that the group of demographic predictors of economic level, enrollment, school level, and years of principal experience had a statistically significant relationship with the Principal's Perspective construct. However, there was no unique predictor that had a statistically significant relationship with the Principal's Perspective construct. In other words, as a group the demographic predictors were related to the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies. However, there was no statistical significance when the researcher isolated each demographic predictor's relationship with the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies. These results are similar to Skiba and Edl's study of Indiana principals (2004). They found that ethnicity alone had little impact on the attitude of the principal regarding discipline measures.

Analysis associated with Research Question 3 revealed that there was no significant relationship between the number of gang-related incidents at the school and the Principal's Perspective construct. This was further supported by the results of Research Question 4 that found that there was no significant relationship between the principal's perception of the presence of gang-related activity at his or her school and the Principal's Perspective construct. In other words, the results suggest that the principal's perception of the number of gang-related incidents at the respondent's school does not influence the Principal's Perspective construct. This is similar to the results outlined in Linda Clark's (2000) study of middle school principals' perspectives regarding on effective strategies used to deter gang-related activity. Although only half the participants in her study had experienced gang activity in their school, they all believed that their gang-related policies were effective.

In the qualitative phase of the study, the principal responses communicated overarching messages. First, gang-related discipline policies successfully provide rules and measures to address gang-related acts. Second, the current policies do not provide consequences that completely suppress or prevent future gang-related behavior. Responses from the eight participating principals for Question 5 of the interview instrument consistently reported that the current gang-related policies addressed gang-related behavior appropriately. They also uniformly reported that communication of the policies helped to suppress gang-related behavior. Once the policy has been implemented toward a gang-related student and a consequence of OSS has been served by the student, six out of eight principals reported that gang-related behavior is often repeated by the student. Recommendations from the participating principals clearly

indicated the need for supportive strategies along with gang-related discipline policy consequences to help suppress and prevent gang-related behavior. Suggestions from the principals included training of teachers and administrators on the latest trends in gang activity, educating parents about signs indicating that their children are in gangs, increased communication and education about gangs to the students, teachers, parents, and community members, and creation of a formal class that must be attended by students who have been punished because of gang-related behavior. One principal suggested a reform school for gang-members.

To summarize the major findings of this study, the results from the quantitative phase indicated that principals do not believe that OSS is an effective consequence to suppress or prevent future gang-related behavior. They agree that the gang-related policies allow them the ability to keep their schools safe from gang activity. Although the economic level, years of principal experience, school level, and school enrollment in total had a significant effect on a Principal's Perspective construct, there was not one unique significant predictor. The qualitative results are in line with the quantitative results that indicated that OSS is not an effective consequence for gang-related behavior. All eight principals indicated that gang-related policies are adequate for purposes of addressing gang-related behaviors in their schools. They further reported that supportive strategies need to be implemented along with consequences in order for these policies to be more effective.

Discussion

Many of the findings in this study are consistent with previous research. The results of the survey and interview instrument indicated that principals believe that gang-

related discipline policies enable them to keep their schools safe. Principals do not believe that OSS is an effective measure in preventing future gang-related behavior. Out-of-school-suspension as an effective consequence has often been challenged by researchers. The National School Boards Association in response to school violence launched a survey on school culture in 1993 and included principals (Anderson, 1998). A great majority of the respondents reported that OSS and expulsion were the answer to consequences for school violence, but a majority also reported that such exclusion practices were ineffective. One participant reported that allowing a student to stay home, sleep in, and watch TV is not effective punishment. Another participant wrote that suspensions do not work because students do not care about being out of school (Anderson, 1998). A majority of these students who participate in gang-related activity are poor and minority students. The NAACP has coined the phrase “School to Prison Pipeline” in response to zero-tolerance policies (Martinez, 2009) and they, as well as other experts, believe that zero-tolerance policies effectively remove delinquent children from the mainstream education system to set them on a road to incarceration.

In Chapter II of this study, the theories on how children develop social behaviors were described. The common themes are that children develop behaviors learned by interactions with their peers and adults with whom they associate and the environment in which they live. The social learning theory centers on behavior modeling; a child develops behaviors by the uncomplicated process of watching and then imitating (Bandura, 1977). The social strain theory suggests that individuals will divert to delinquent behavior when they cannot obtain their ultimate goal of being a productive citizen socially and financially. Furthermore, the positive and negative reinforcements

accompanied with delinquent behavior from the child's peers will influence the future delinquent behavior as outlined by the behavior theory.

Social disorganization theory further elaborates on these themes. Sampson and Wilson (1995), proponents of the disorganization theory, claim that violent criminals often belong to a group of delinquents such as a gang. Delinquent behaviors by youth are more likely to develop in a disorganized community and in circumstances in which the leadership is missing in and outside of the home. They further suggest that in communities where these types of criminal behaviors are not addressed at an early age by social constraints, the delinquent youth will most likely grow into adult criminals.

At the individual level, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001) believe that gang development is a social phenomenon. They, along with other researchers, believe that social disorganization is a key factor. The social disorganization theory (Wyrick & Howell, 2004) also identifies poor achievement in school, at the elementary level in particular as a strong risk factor for gang membership.

The point here is that the theoretical framework provides insight into the belief of principals that suspending a child out of school as a consequence for gang-related behavior by itself is not effective. The multiple variables that influence a child's behavior cannot be changed by OSS alone. For the safety of the school, removal of the gang-related child is crucial, especially if he or she is violent. What is lacking in policy are rehabilitative measures outside of a punitive consequence to change the student's behavior. Out-of-school-suspension also fundamentally violates many of the precepts of basic learning theory. Skinner (2005) reported a behavior is strengthened when accompanied by some positive experience or reward. Punishing a child who does not

like school by keeping him or her home away from school will not change the child's behavior.

As articulated in Chapter II, the main purpose of the juvenile court system is rehabilitation (Nelson, 2008). Recent psychological and neurological studies in adolescent development suggest that juvenile courts can and should continue efforts in the rehabilitation of young offenders; this is also the charge for schools. Diminished capacity is the concept that youths are less culpable for their acts than adults. The premise for focus on rehabilitation was the acknowledgment that youth are not little adults. Because of the limited life experience, youth have not had the chance to fully develop physically, intellectually, or emotionally. The lack of development justifies the less punitive response by the courts (Van Vleet, 1999). This is further supported by Gardner (1987), who wrote that "adolescent persons lack life experience and thus might be best viewed as 'semi-autonomous,' 'incomplete adults.' It is therefore unrealistic and unfair to hold them to adult responsibility standards" (p. 142). All eight principals who participated in the interview of the qualitative phase of the study reported that supportive strategies need to be implemented along with gang-related policy consequences in order to address gang-related behavior more effectively. A part of the rehabilitation should also include teaching the child replacement behavior for those behaviors that are problematic.

Limitations

The study's findings were limited by a number of factors. The sample of school principals was drawn from four large, suburban/urban districts in a southeastern state.

Generalization of findings beyond school districts with similar profiles should be approached with caution.

The sample population of the eight principals who were interviewed consisted of seven principals from one school district. The predominance of one school district being a part of the sample population was not the intent of the researcher and the fact that their schools met the criteria was purely by chance, since their inclusion was determined by the number of gang-related incidents.

The number of responses for the item on total gang-related incidents was limited by four survey participants, three high schools and one middle school, who did not complete question 28 completely. One of the high schools completed two of the three years of data on gang-related incident due to the fact that the high school has only been open for two years. It is the researcher's position that the lack of data from 4 of the 43 participants was due to random chance and there was not a particular pattern.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

From the results of this research a number of recommendations to suppress gang-related activity surfaced from this research. At the local school level, a positive and safe learning environment is important for administrators, teachers, students and the community to establish. Looking specifically at gang-related behavior, implementing a communication and education plan for stakeholders would help increase the effectiveness of the gang-related discipline policies. Each of the eight principals interviewed mentioned that communication and education about gangs are important tools in the effort to suppress gang-related activity. Skiba and Edl (2004) found in their study of Indiana's principals regarding the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion that taking

time at school to teach appropriate behavior could be beneficial to the culture of the school. These principals also believed that their schools had a handle on school violence because their teachers were well-versed in classroom management.

Another recommendation is that out-of-school-suspension (OSS) for gang-related behavior should be coupled with rehabilitation strategies in the effort to change the student's gang-related behavior. This can be accomplished in many ways as suggested by principals' responses in the qualitative phase of this study. For example, one principal suggested that the local police would be a valuable tool in working with gang-related students. The principal mentioned that in her county, there is a gang task-force that works closely with the local schools on identifying gang members and informing schools of the latest gang trends. She mentioned that the gang task force should be frequently invited to talk to students about the pitfalls of gang membership. As a student is consequenced for gang-related activity, members of the gang task-force, along with administrators, should be invited to talk to the student as a part of his or her consequence.

Another principal interview participant suggested creating a class on gangs for students to participate in if they are consequenced for participation in a gang-related activity. The class's curriculum would include information about gangs, school district policy and consequences for gang participation, strategies for students to keep out of gangs, and strategies to exit from a gang. At the current time, the researcher's school district has a class for students who break the drug and alcohol policy in school. A student has the ability to lower his or her number of day's out-of-school if he or she takes the class with his or her parent. Such a model might be effective for a similar type of class that is directed at gang-related behavior. The respondents also recommended that

district and state level administrators allocate appropriate funding for the necessary resources to implement anti-gang programs and rehabilitation strategies such as the class described.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research would benefit the efforts of principals in their goal to keep schools safe from gang-related activity:

1. Future research is recommended in the area of anti-gang programs and classes to assist gang-related discipline policies in suppressing gang-related behavior.
2. In order to provide a more representative sample of principal perspectives, it is recommended that future research of this sort include a larger number of middle and high school principals from a broader geographical and demographic sample.
3. In evaluating efforts to rehabilitate students, the inclusion of school counselors in the sample in future research could yield more insight into effective rehabilitative strategies and consequences.
4. In the effort to better understand the phenomenon of gang members and increase the effectiveness of school consequences in addressing gang-related behavior, researchers should include students who had a history of participating in gang-related activities in their samples.
5. In the effort to change student behavior, further studies should inquire into alternatives to out-of-school suspension as punishment for gang-related behavior in school.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if current discipline policies related to gang affiliation provide administrators at the middle and high school level with the means to keep their schools safe from gang-related misconduct. Feedback was sought on the association between principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related activity and school demographic information, the presence of gang-related activity and the number of gang-related incidents at the school. Specific feedback on recommended improvement of current district gang-related policies from four middle and four high school principals was also analyzed.

The study involved a mixed methodology with a survey instrument that included quantitative items and an interview instrument that included qualitative questions posed to a subset of the sample of principals. The rationale for using a mixed method was to ensure a more comprehensive approach to obtaining information about principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policies.

For the quantitative phase, the mean score for Question 24 ($M = 2.93$) that asked if suspensions of gang-related students prevent future gang-related misbehavior was significantly different than six of the seven questions. For Research Questions 2 through 4, only the demographic predictors as a whole had statistically significant impact on the principals' perspectives regarding the adequacy of gang-related policy. The number of gang-related incidents and the principal perception of gang presence had no statistically significant influence on the principals' perspective regarding the adequacy of gang-related policy.

The results from the quantitative phase revealed that principals do not believe that OSS is an effective consequence to suppress or prevent future gang-related behavior. They agree that the gang-related policies allow them the ability to keep their schools safe from gang activity. Although the economic level, years of principal experience, school level, and school enrollment in total had a significant effect on principals' perspective regarding the adequacy of gang-related behavior, there was not a unique significant predictor.

For the qualitative phase, eight principals selected in accordance with the number of gang-related incidents at the school for the past three years were interviewed. The results were coded by theme and placed in two categories. The qualitative result revealed general satisfaction with gang-related policies. The results also supported the notion that OSS is not an effective consequence for gang-related behavior. All eight principals reported that supportive strategies need to be implemented along with gang-related policy consequences to be more effective.

The study also addressed recommendations for policy and future research. For policy, gang-related consequences need to be coupled with rehabilitative strategies in the effort to change the student's behavior. Communication and education about gangs should be provided to stakeholders in an effort to suppress gang-activity at school.

APPENDIX A

Middle and High School Principal Survey on Adequacy of Gang-Related Discipline Policies Survey Instrument

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to determine middle and high school perceptions of the adequacy of school district gang-related discipline strategies. Your professional input on the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies provides an important and meaningful source of information on how to deter gang-related behavior in school.

For the purpose of this survey, a "gang" is defined as any group or association of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, which encourages, solicits, promotes, urges, counsels, furthers, advocates, condones, assists, causes, advises, procures, or abets any illegal or disruptive activity or behavior of any kind, whether on or off school campuses or school property.

I respectfully ask that you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. All individual information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any district or university employee except as summary information.

Part 1

Demographic Information

(Please darken the circle that best reflects your demographics and experiences.)

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|-------------|---|
| <p>1. What is your gender?</p> <p>Ⓐ Male</p> <p>Ⓑ Female</p> | <p>2. What is the level of the school where you are the principal?</p> <p>Ⓐ Middle School Ⓑ High School</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>3. How many years have you been a principal?</p> <p>Ⓐ First year principal</p> <p>Ⓑ 1-5 years of principal experience</p> <p>Ⓒ 6-10 years of principal experience</p> <p>Ⓓ 11-15 years of principal experience</p> <p>Ⓔ 16 years or more of principal experience</p> | <p>4. What is your level of education?</p> <p>Ⓐ Master's Degree</p> <p>Ⓑ Specialist Degree</p> <p>Ⓒ Doctorate Degree</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>5. What is enrollment size of your current school?</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Middle School</td> <td style="width: 50%;">High School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ⓐ Under 500</td> <td>Ⓓ Under 1000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ⓑ 500-750</td> <td>Ⓔ 1000-1500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ⓒ 750-1000</td> <td>Ⓕ 1500-2000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ⓓ 1000-1250</td> <td>Ⓖ 2000-2500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ⓔ Over 1250</td> <td>Ⓗ Over 2500</td> </tr> </table> | Middle School | High School | Ⓐ Under 500 | Ⓓ Under 1000 | Ⓑ 500-750 | Ⓔ 1000-1500 | Ⓒ 750-1000 | Ⓕ 1500-2000 | Ⓓ 1000-1250 | Ⓖ 2000-2500 | Ⓔ Over 1250 | Ⓗ Over 2500 | <p>6. Please indicate your ethnicity/race. (Darken one circle only.)</p> <p>Ⓐ American Indian or Alaska Native</p> <p>Ⓑ Asian or Pacific Islander</p> <p>Ⓒ African-American</p> <p>Ⓓ White</p> <p>Ⓔ Hispanic</p> <p>Ⓕ Other</p> |
| Middle School | High School | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ⓐ Under 500 | Ⓓ Under 1000 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ⓑ 500-750 | Ⓔ 1000-1500 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ⓒ 750-1000 | Ⓕ 1500-2000 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ⓓ 1000-1250 | Ⓖ 2000-2500 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ⓔ Over 1250 | Ⓗ Over 2500 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>7. The ethnicity of my school's population is as follows:</p> <p>(Fill in the percentage of total population for each group listed)</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Asian</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black</td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hispanic</td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White</td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multi</td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> </table> | Asian | _____ | Black | _____ | Hispanic | _____ | White | _____ | Multi | _____ | <p>8. What is the economic level that best identifies my school? (Darken the circle that best describes the percent of students on Free and Reduce Lunch at your school)</p> <p>Ⓐ Up to 25%</p> <p>Ⓑ 25% to 50%</p> <p>Ⓒ Above 50%</p> | | |
| Asian | _____ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black | _____ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hispanic | _____ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| White | _____ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Multi | _____ | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Part 2**Gang Presence and Activity at My School****(Please rate items 9 – 19 on a scale of 1 – 5, circling one number response for each question.)**

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 9. Gangs are present in my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 10. Gangs at my school have a negative impact on student achievement. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 11. My students are aware of gang activity in my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 12. My teachers are aware of gang activity in my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 13. My gang-related students bring violence to my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 14. My gang-related students use drugs. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 15. A significant number of my students wear gang-related clothing and accessories. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 16. A significant number of my students use gang related-hand signals. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 17. Gangs bring disorderly conduct to my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 18. Gang-related students have identifying tattoos at my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 19. Gang-members recruit new members at my school. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |

Part 3**Perceptions of Adequacy of Gang-Related Discipline Policies and Consequences****(Please rate items 20 – 27 on a scale of 1 – 5, circling one number response for each question.)**

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 20. My school district's gang policies are clearly written. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 21. My school district's gang policies cover all areas of gang activity. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 22. Gang policies at my school are strictly enforced. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 23. Suspensions out-of-school are effective consequences for gang-related behavior. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |
| 24. Suspension of gang-related students prevent future gang-related misbehavior. | Strongly
Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly
Agree |

25. My district's gang policies allow for appropriate consequences that support the goal of a safe learning environment. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
26. Disciplinary measures allowed by the district are appropriate to the severity of incident. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
27. My school involves the campus security officer in all school gang-related incidents. Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
28. What were the annual numbers of incidents for the following offenses for the past three years?

Behavior	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Alcohol and Drugs			
Disrespectful Conduct			
Disruption of School			
Gang-Related Activity			
Fighting			
Harassment, Intimidation, Threats			
Property Offences (Vandalism)			
Sexual Activity			
Tobacco			
Weapons			

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX B

**Middle and High School Principal Survey on Adequacy
of Gang-Related Discipline Policies
Interview Instrument**

1. What are your opinions about out-of-school suspension as an effective measure in suppressing future gang-related behavior? Explain and provide examples.
2. Do current gang-related discipline policies put you in a position of being proactive or reactive to gang-related behavior? Explain and provide examples.
3. What types of gang-related activity are most often repeated after the student serves his or her gang-related policy consequence? Explain and provide examples.
4. Are there forms of gang-activity that are effectively suppressed by current gang-related district discipline policy? Explain and provide examples.
5. Do current gang-related discipline policies in your district provide disciplinary interventions that address all types of gang-related incidents at your school? Explain and provide examples.

Gang Related Behaviors	District Provides Disciplinary Interventions Comments
Alcohol and Drugs	
Disrespectful Conduct	
Disruption of School	
Gang-Related Activity	
Fighting	
Harassment, Intimidation, Threats	
Property Offences (Vandalism)	
Sexual Activity	
Tobacco	
Weapons	

6. What suggestions do you have for improving district discipline policy related to gang-related behavior by students?

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTE REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
 Tel: 601.266.6820
 Fax: 601.266.5509
 www.usm.edu/irb

**HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
 NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11032105

PROJECT TITLE: **A Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Administrative Rules for Gang-Related Activities in Middle and High School**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 03/03/2011 to 12/31/2011

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **David Thomas Chiprany**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership & School Counseling**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **04/05/2011 to 04/04/2012**

Lawrence A. Hosman
 Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
 HSPRC Chair

4-6-2011
 Date

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO ACCOMPANY SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Dear Participants,

I am conducting research on middle and high school principal perspectives on the adequacy of gang-related discipline policies. I am interested in your professional opinion on the effectiveness of your school district's gang-related discipline policies in suppressing and preventing gang-related activity at your school.

Please take a few moments of your time to fill out the attached questionnaire. It should take no more than 20 minutes. The questionnaire contains 28 questions. Questions 1-6 and 8 seek demographic information about you and your school. Question 7 asks for the participant to fill in the appropriate percentage for each requested category that represents the ethnic breakdown of their school. Questions 9-19 seek information about types of gang-related activity at your school. Questions 20-27 seek your opinion on whether or not your district's gang-related policies adequately address your gang-related incidents. Question #28 asks you to identify the average number of gang-related incidents for the past three years. Question #29 asks for your suggestions on improving the gang-related school district disciplines policies

The data collected from the completed questionnaires will be compiled and analyzed. All data collected is anonymous. Respectfully, I request that you refrain from writing your name or identifying information. All information gathered will be kept completely confidential. As the researcher, I am very grateful for your participation; your completed questionnaire will serve as your consent to participate. However, you have the option to decline to participate if you so wish. If you decide to withdraw from participation at any time there is no penalty or risk of negative consequence.

From your experience, you can provide valuable information on the adequacy of current gang-related discipline policies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of suppressing and preventing future gang-related activity in schools. The data you provide will be used by me, the researcher, to add to the bank of research on suggested school district discipline policies on gang-related activity. Returning the completed survey implies your consent to participate.

Should you have any questions please contact: David Chiprany, email: david.chiprany@cobbk12.org. This research is under the supervising Professor, Dr. Mike Ward, University of Southern Mississippi, email: mike.ward@usm.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that all research fits the federal guidelines for involving human subjects. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266 6820.

Sincerely,

David Thomas Chiprany
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX E

ADULT CONSENT FOR RESEARCH FORM: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
601-266-6820

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Date:

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Administrative Rules for Gang-Related Activities in Middle and High Schools in a Southeastern United States School district

Research will be conducted by: David Thomas Chiprany 770-578-3270

Email Address: david.chiprany@cobbk12.org

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mike Ward

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given the first two pages of this consent form and the researcher will keep the third sheet which contains your signature. You should ask the researcher named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study effectiveness of administrative rules for gang-related activities in middle and high schools in a southeastern United States school district.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 8 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

You will be asked to sign a consent form and complete a 28 interview questions which will last no longer than 20 minutes. You may be asked to participate in a 6 question interview at a later day if you are selected out the sample population. A report of my findings will be made available to you upon request at the conclusion of this study by emailing me at david.chiprany@cobbk12.org.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

You will be asked to sign a consent form and participate in survey and the interview. The researcher will record the interview to maintain integrity of responses. The survey and consent form will be shredded upon completion of this project.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

The benefit of the study will be the contribution of findings on the effectiveness of gang-related school district discipline policy. Measuring the quality of a discipline policy that address gang-related activity is vital in giving principal's the tools in keeping his or her school safe from gang-related incidents. david.chiprany@cobbk12.org.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

The risks are that the respondents may get tired or bored reflecting on the adequacy of policies

How will your privacy be protected?

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Only researcher and faculty advisors will view the interview responses. Interview tapes will be kept secure and locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office. Interview responses and consent forms will be shredded after a 5 years.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-6820

Title of Study: A Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Administrative Rules for Gang-Related Activities in Middle and High Schools in a Southeastern United States School District

Principal Investigator: David Thomas Chiprany

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX F

Middle and High School Principal Interview Summary of Responses

1. What are your opinions about out-of-school suspension as an effective measure in suppressing future gang-related behavior? Explain and provide examples.

Middle and High School With Low Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 1 MS	I don't know what influence it would have on current gang members
Subject 2 MS	I do not see out of school as effective....the freedom at home may result in an increase in gang activities as a result of the student being out of school
Subject 3 HS	It is affective in minimizing it and in affect eliminating because some students do not want to be suspended from school
Subject 4 HS	The policy communicatedit is affective at school for suppressing gang activity
Middle and High School With High Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 5 MS High	It is not an effective deterrent...puts students on the streets
Subject 6 MS High	It doesn't work, if suspended from school they need to be sent somewhere to be educated....school is not the appropriate place to display gang activity.
Subject 7 HS High	It might work with the right support from the support staff at school and home...time on the streets reinforce the behaviors they are trying to exhibit at school.
Subject 8 HS High	I am not sure if it is an effective measure of suppressing future behavior...it does not set tone....

2. Do current gang-related discipline policies put you in a position of being proactive or reactive to gang-related behavior? Explain and provide examples.

Middle and High School With Low Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 1 MS	Reactive ...no programs that teach students how to avoid or not participate in specific gang related activities...the policy address behavior after it has happened
Subject 2 MS	Combination....first response is reactive for the most part students in gangs before signs appear. For the want-a-bees the policy allow us to be proactive.
Subject 3 HS	As it is written, it is reactive. We are proactive we share the policy with the students and make sure they are aware of....gang task force lets kids know consequences
Subject 4 HS	For me it is proactive... we communicate the policies...the freshman know that if they are within the building if they do anything gang-related there will be consequences.
Middle and High School With High Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 5 MS	Both engage gang affiliates andtribunal if necessary.
Subject 6 MS	Reactive, until they do something we do don't do anything. We do not have the personnel to address gang activities
Subject 7 HS	Proactive for the most part... for the most part we are respondingwe are seeing clothing and the other signs then the policy allows us to act upon it...
Subject 8 HS	Proactive...there are items listed that I can begin to have conversations with students when they are very close to violation policy.... I can use the policy to be proactive.

3. What types of gang-related activity are most often repeated after the student serves his or her gang-related policy consequence? Explain and provide examples.

Middle and High School With Low Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 1 MS Low	The most impact I've ...is when the child comes back to school, something has been put on Facebook...behavior changes , you told on me, I'm gonna get you.
Subject 2 MS Low	I would say 0 we have not had any repeat activities
Subject 3 HS Low	That can change, obviously they still may throw gang signs or recruiting and you'll sometimes see a fight so I don't know if there is one that is most repeated
Subject 4 HS Low	Only thing that is repeated is drawings on notebooks....it is rare that we get tagged in the bathrooms.
Middle and High School With High Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 5 MS High	Recruitment is the major repeat offense and then school disruption
Subject 6 MS High	Display of gang paraphernalia and holding yourself out to be a gang member....
Subject 7 HS High	Gang related fighting....and clothing to some degree.....
Subject 8 HS High	We have not had repeat offenders once there have been consequences with the policy

4. Are there forms of gang-activity that are effectively suppressed by current gang-related district discipline policy? Explain and provide examples.

Middle and High School With Low Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 1 MS Low	I think students have a keen understandings of not to bring weapons to follow through on threats and must action is taken off school campus
Subject 2 MS Low	I think the policy has enough teeth and we do speak to students up front...I would hope that would deter students ... that can get them in major trouble...
Subject 3 HS Low	Once you address it and deal with it....you will have fewer incidents and students seeking gang membership are going to see that and it will reduce anything that they might do.
Subject 4 HS Low	Yes, for us it is mostly drawing....for us the policy works.
Middle and High School With High Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 5 MS High	Yes, the culture of the building the advisement program along with awareness initiatives help gang affiliates call truces while on site...
Subject 6 MS High	I progressive consequences help but I don't think that there is one policy that suppresses it completely... we need to educate more. We do well explaining the consequences and counseling the students on better choices.
Subject 7 HS High	I don't think clothing is one, I think having kids gather together at certain times we can immediately break that up....
Subject 8 HS High	Yes, on campus they are suppressed...gang-related behavior may take place later but not on campus.

5. Do current gang-related discipline policies in your district provide disciplinary interventions that address all types of gang-related incidents at your school? Explain and provide examples.

Middle and High School With Low Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 1 MS Low	Yes because those policies are divided up in a mannerso I think it is lineated. When I suspend a student, often I'll cite more than one policy offense...
Subject 2 MS Low	No..... I think that all of those are spelled out in [the district] Cobb policy and consequences are substantial.
Subject 3 HS Low	Yes, um in any of these that you deal with you have a policy you can implement in order to reduce any of these activities or behaviors....
Subject 4 HS Low	I do for me it really..... For us, we could go more even a ten day suspension. Um, in our book it could be stronger in deterring future gang activity.
Middle and High School With High Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 5 MS High	Yes, all of the gang behaviors are covered by district discipline policies.
Subject 6 MS High	I think that it always fits somewhere and we have other subversive behavior....and when we don't we add it the next year.
Subject 7 HS High	I haven't had the experience of having to deal with a situation the event or incident that was not covered by some policy In my case yes.....
Subject 8 HS High	Yes I do. I believe our district officers are conscious of new issues and will adapt the policy as needed for the coming years. They have done a good job working with local gang task force to stay abreast or gang issues and when to apply it policy.

6. What suggestions do you have for improving district discipline policy related to gang-related behavior by students?

Middle and High School With Low Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 1 MS Low	I think currently the administrators are afforded the opportunity to attend different presentations by police officers, community officials to learn what the latest trends are in gang activity, but we never bring that to our students. We also don't present to our students in a proactive way the ramifications of gang related behavior.
Subject 2 MS Low	The only that I would say there is the only suggestions ...help parents um who maybe in denial that their child is in a gang and they don't know how to help their child um ward off the gang enticement, if there is anything we can do to help.
Subject 3 HS Low	Continue to conduct the training and the education that we all should have. We have a great gang task force....so make sure we are um still working very closely with them. It is very important to continue the communication.
Subject 4 HS Low	I think the only thing for us is the communication part, the more times we reference it, and the parents reference it and that the activity will not be tolerated. The level of assurance that we at Lassiter are not going to tolerate anything related to gangs and it is not going to be tolerated.
Middle and High School With High Incident Rates of Gang-Related Activity	
Subject 5 MS High	These policies may be improved with the formation and input of a district-wide committee and a thorough review of leading school districts and their policies on gang-related behavior.
Subject 6 MS High	If they could write up a plan or curriculum we could use for student in a gang like we do for alcohol. A formal class setting where consequenced gang-related students can learn about the risks of gang participation. Have groups go through the program.
Subject 7 HS High	Um, I think that truancy is probably the biggest thing. It is a booster for gangs not in school they are strengthening their gang ties and when they come back to school um they come back stronger because they have be out messing around and doing things. I could also see I think a boot camp and I know that is also budgetary constrained. At any point in time going in that direction have a boot camp for them.
Subject 8 HS High	I do know that we have a policy that is somewhat of a catch all and there is a portion of the policy that we could to deal with a situation and the behavior in whatever the situation is.

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